

Essays from Species Traitor

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Contents

Towards Autonomy	4
Case Studies on the Dualistic Nature of the Totality: Technology. The Allegory of the Accident.	5
Against Cities	9
Pacifism as a Deterrent to Peace	14
The Witch and the Wildness	15
Discontents in the State of Inequality: Noble Dependents	21
Sticks, Stones and Nursery Homes	25
The Reproduction of Production: Class, Modernity and Identity	31
Collapse	36
The Message and the Messenger: FC, Ted Kaczynski, and the Resisting the Technological System	50
The Significance of FC	51
The Significance of Ted Kaczynski	53
Artifacts and Anarchy: the Implications of Pre-History	59
An Interview with Anarcho-Primitivist Archaeologist, Theresa Kintz	59
Closing comments.	73
Anarchy and Anthropology	74
Outsiders Looking In and Away	74
Creating Reality	75
Cataloguing Conquest	76
Revolutionary Potential	77
And the Spectacle Goes On	79
Theses on the Fall of Civilization <i>or</i> How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace the Coming Collapse	83
What is the Totality?	86

Towards Autonomy

Our culture suffers from an extreme personality disorder. It seems that it is wearing so much armor, that it forgets it's even connected to its' body. The face is so preoccupied with make up that it forgets to look down.

We're built ourselves up so high that we forget that we need our foundations to stay afloat. We just say, "Here we are, now let's deal with it." Nowhere else can this be clearer than in our 'race for the cure' approach to life.

It surrounds us. It is BP selling stuffed 'endangered animals' toys with fill ups. IT is Phillip Morris out to find the cure for cancer. It is Weyerhaeuser protecting the wilderness, and Police protecting urban youth from violence. It is Monsanto feeding the starving 'third world' children, and Channel One teaching 'first world' children.

This is it, the dichotomy of good and evil (life and survival, damnation and salvation, dictator and leader, take your pick), which underlies the conquests of 'progress', comes down to public relations.

Sink or swim, has been changed to float with us and you'll worry no more. We plunge into "It", the undying, righteous, creator/sustainer. You can live forever, but the fine print is getting harder to read as we drag on and lose our vision to the luminescent glow of TVs, in-store track lighting, computers, and streetlights.

We want more than anything to never die. This constant search for limbo permeates our lust for life, since pure freedom doesn't have the catchy jingles that its' zombie replacements willingly offer.

The dying desperately grasp to the life they've never had.

Obsessions with the progression into a future of such technological magnitude that we need never even breathe for ourselves, compressed with an over-reluctant ness to push the 'past' further behind (onto 'e-history bookshelves'), has placed us into a 'might is right' corner where 'the Ends' (progress and growth) have presumptuously justified any 'means' which may arise (bio-devastation or avoidable diseases, perhaps).

And where does a cure fit it?

The search for cures is a part of the unquestioning ideology of civilization. To search for a cure is to 'level the playing field', so to speak. A cure presumes one is needed, that the problem is naturally occurring. This turns cancer, retardation, and stupidity into a natural genetic 'mishap', rather than what they are, results of the 'means' to a non-existent 'end'. The search for such is digging our own graves. The cure for one problem is the cause for the next, and as long as we isolate each problem, the cycle is self-perpetuating.

What we need is solutions. We can't turn a blind eye to the foundations of civilization, and we must ask ourselves if this is really what should be occurring. The reasoning for the entire social order must be brought into question.

Only when this is done can we stop sacrificing for the future, and start living now.

Case Studies on the Dualistic Nature of the Totality: Technology. The Allegory of the Accident.

At 2:15 A.M., a miracle occurs in the emergency room of Kennedy Memorial Hospital.

It played out like this:

11:23 P.M.- Dan and friends are finishing off their weekly ritual of getting plastered in celebration of another week of work down the drain. Working for the past 13 years in a fast-paced assembly line, Dan and friends now require excessive alcohol consumption at least 2 nights a week to help pass away the time till retirement. 11:31 P.M.- Amy, who is 7 and a half months pregnant and a soon-to-be single mother, departs from her parents house. She is constantly bothered by fears of not being able to provide for her child and is plagued by worries over how to care for her child.

11:52 P.M.- Both within ten miles of their respective dwellings, Amy and Dan become soothed at the thought of being almost home and fade into thoughts of relaxation. This thought, combined with excessive amounts of alcohol, make it harder for Dan to focus on the red light at the quickly nearing intersection. Amy, in her downtrodden state, is also less aware of Dan's vehicle rapidly approaching.

11:52:41 P.M.- Amy's Ford Escort traveling at 42 MPH is now plowed in the driver's side by Dan's Dodge Ram. Which mildly slowed by a last minute slam on the breaks is still charging at 32 MPH.

11:53:24 P.M.- A nearby driver, Charles, sees the collision and immediately alerts Emergency Operator Suzanne by means of his Nokia cellular phone. Suzanne has 2 ambulances dispatched immediately to the intersection, where Charles is "afraid he can't tell exactly what is going on."

11:55 P.M.- The emergency crew, consisting of 2 ambulances, 1 fire truck, and 3 police squad cars, arrives at the scene. Charles rushes to Officer Daniels to give his mildly coherent account of the 'real life emergency'. Officer Daniels follows procedure by calming Charles and attempting to get an accurate account of the 'event'. Still in awe of the unfolding adventure, Charles mutters, "thank god I had my Nokia handy."

11:52:26 P.M.- Amy's door is completely crushed, leaving her arm now intertwined with the 'Shatter Resistant Glass' of her window. Fire/Rescue Engine No. 8 member Jeff is able to pry open the passenger side door and extract Amy. Upon noticing her critical condition, Jeff brings her to the 'safety' of the ambulance. He constantly reassures the comatose Amy, "you'll be fine, just hang in there."

Dan's Dodge Ram is luckily equipped with Dual Side Airbags. He is extracted by Fire/Rescue Engine No. 8 member Frank, who brings the dazed Dan to an ambulance.

The fire truck now hoses down both vehicles to assure the surrounding residents that the situation is "under control". The dramatic effects are accentuated to reaffirm the heroism of the

emergency crew. One hundred and three onlookers will now disperse to flood the news of their encounters with the scene of a near death encounter.

11:58 P.M.- Jeff's ambulance arrives at Kennedy Memorial Hospital. He proceeds to cart Amy into the Emergency Room and alerts the critical condition to Doctor Robertson, who immediately shouts orders to his lackeys. His qualifications to do so lie in the prefix of Doctor, the nurses must act upon his decisions. He, however, is calm as can be, he has "seen this sort of thing a million times."

11:59 P.M.- Dan arrives at Kennedy Memorial Hospital Emergency Room. He is taken in, but it is quickly noted that he is not in critical condition. He will sit in the hall awaiting care for 18 minutes until a certified doctor stops by and prescribes his ailments.

A large contingency of 'populists' and 'progressives' will find this aspect to be particularly disturbing. They feel there is a dire need to extend the entire medicinal institution to better deal with this painstakingly bureaucratic detail. The blindness to the social contexts surrounding this institution is another symptom of the success of the totality to separate problems with the Problem (the totality itself: the existence of civilization). The functionalism of leftism within that framework can be seen as it's strong point of overall failure.

12:05 A.M.- As the textbook procedures are coming and going, so is Amy's desperate grasp onto life. One is forced to wonder if her pre-accident dilemmas may weigh heavily upon the strength of that grasp.

Chemicals are now flowing through her blood stream via the IV injected into her veins. That very blood is pumping because of the 'Life Saving' machines that are mechanically replicating the functions of her vital organs in order to preserve her hollowing shell of a body.

The forced vital activities are not able to provide the same service for her brain. As the consciousness fades into oblivion, hopeful Nurse Becky wishes there was a way to 'save' the mind in a manner such as that being implored upon Amy's ironing lungs. The brain reduced to a purely mechanistic component; the soul has lost its place in light of Modern Times.

A decision is passed from the Expert to now focus attention on the unborn child inside Amy. The decision is upheld by an instantaneous change of pace by the flock of lackeys surrounding Amy's dying body.

It will later be explained by Dr. Robertson that it is a miracle and trophy to Progress that a premature baby can now be 'extracted' and placed in a replica womb where it can go onto live a 'normal' life.

This brief analysis is to be picked up by every bit of alert media who will later fight for the most dramatic reenactment of the situation for their sponsors to pat them on the wallet for. The best rendition will be rewarded with a 'based on a true story' made-for-TV movie, whereas the runner ups will be rewarded with a spot of a 'real life' drama show exalting the miracles of modern medicine and technology of the glory of life in the gory ER. This is the spectacle of our society in work.

The viewers wait at the edge of their couches and clench for closure as they await success though intervals of cleverly placed, 30 second, lifestyle enhancement, product pitches (In groups of 3 to 5 depending on the ability of the show to unknowingly lure consumers .). They all know the way the story ends, but the happy ending needs constant reimbursement for those partaking in the 'most exciting age in history.'

Necessary detail: 12:11:32 A.M.- Amy has let go. A brief moment of inner contemplation at the gaping void of emotion on the part of the lackeys. Recovery begins, the show must go on.

12:14 A.M.- An emergency Caesarian Section is done on Amy's corpse, the blood pours out of her deceased body and the fetus is removed from the womb. The Surgery Room is now in a state of panic as they race the clock to assure the baby is 'alive'. The next couple hours will be the most strenuous the child will ever have. It goes back and forth on the level of criticalness. A swarm of nurses surrounds the mechanical womb, a machine is there to perform every function the baby needs to 'live'. It is a battle of testing the child's reactions to the technicalities of the mechanical womb. Only time will determine the fate of the baby.

12:15 A.M.- The evidence of disaster is now towed away; traffic patterns resume to regularity.

12:17 A.M.- Dan is finally visited by Doctor Smith. Upon quick examination the professional verdict is handed down. The verdict: the impact of the airbag with the inertia of the collision has resulted in a broken nose and jaw, on top of this, the seatbelt Dan wore broke his left collar bone. He had some serious bruises and scrapes, but nothing really bad, only appearing worse since the alcohol thinned the blood out and gave the impression of more serious bleeding.²⁰

The doctor hands down his decree and the lackeys pick up the mess. The word of manslaughter charges floats through ER walls and the doctor wishes for a second that the technology to so easily help Dan wasn't available so he could suffer more for his folly. The thought quickly passes away as the good Doctor recalls that it is incidents such as this that "keep the medical establishment running".

It seems that the new technologies not only cure more effectively, but too quickly. Now it is the Business of Curing, and it needs more clients. This incident is business as usual to the medicinal establishment.

2:15 A.M.- After the long process of trying to replace the womb for the child, it is declared that the child will live. Excitement fills the ER staff for a moment before they move onto the next set of patients and unfolding dramatic moments.

The baby will be left electronically supervised until it can exist on its own. From there legal battles will ensue over 'rights' to the motherless child. As it is raised in a synthetic environment (more than likely with numerous new diseases) on synthetic 'life sources', it will rejoice in the knowledge that it was because of technology that it survived the disaster its mother didn't.

The viewer rejoices in a daily affirmation of the privilege of being a sacrifice to the coming techno-utopia.

God bless Progress.

Refusal to Become History

The situation just explained was a made up story. That is a 'based on a true story' story, while specifics may differentiate, the situation is hardly a rare one in our society. More important than the story, however, is the tone.

Throughout the many Progress affirming stories our society loves to tell itself, is a constant theme, that of shortsightedness.

The totality exists by stagnating our daily life into a series of events. For each event there is development, climax and conclusion. All conflicts unfold and are dealt with and put away into storybooks for further lessons next time around. For a culture as obsessed with history and past experience as ours, the past is doomed to repeat itself. This becomes our ideology.

It is through our ideological looking glass that we can feel thankful for something that 'gives back' a little from what it takes.

In the situation laid out in the previous pages, the emphasis lies not on technology for creating the position in the first place, but for prevailing in the end (and for those who feel I have set up

a straw person, you would need to look only at a newspaper or watch a few hours of 'real life TV' to find quite a few stories mirroring this one). We would sooner praise the artificial 'life giving' machines than question the role of the life taking ones. The situation builds to the throne of Progress instead of hacking at its roots.

There is also a clearly intentional overshoot of the amount of lives taken in the production of the 'life saving' machines. The majority of the high tech products are made in sweatshops which put known carcinogens into the air, water and soil. The unspoken cost can be seen in the development of such 'plagues' as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, which has taken a much higher toll upon those forced to live and work in these areas. SIDS, however, is never given a name until it begins to enter the lives of those in the 'first world' populations. At this point millions of dollars are turned into research for a more synthetic approach to 'detering' the problem. More medicines and technologies are seen as the solution to all problems. This is the dualistic reality inherent in the civilized mindset.

In the case of Dan and Amy, the totality allows for criticism only as far as to extend the limitations elsewhere. One group could see the situation as evidence for stricter legislations on drinking and driving laws (which could result in more clients for the Corrections and Enforcement Establishments). Another group could see it as grounds for more safety in vehicles (perhaps side mount airbags, added security equals added comfort equals added sales). The cell phone companies would be quick to point out their role in assistance (it's worth the money if it saves lives [even if it gives you tumors]). It goes on and on, but it goes on in circles.

To isolate the situation is to enforce the power of the totality. The lesson learned should never accept the situation as it is, it should be grounds to reevaluate the entire circumstance. Why were the cars even there? Why was Dan drunk? Why was Amy so preoccupied? Anything short of a complete reworking of the society which allows such incidents will only find more problems in the end.

An example a little closer to home is the attitude that the success of recent confrontations, such as Seattle, Nov. 99, was based primarily on the organization that took place over the internet. True or not, granting to success to the technology is completely overlooking the factor that that very technology had in the success for the globalizing state powers. This case especially brings out this duality since those who profit from the sale and manufacturing of technologies had such a heavy hand in the first place. If a doctor says your intestines are bleeding you wouldn't thank him for aspirin. This is exactly how the system was built to work.

It is because of this that we should never accept these situations as another lesson to be packed away in story books. Every time this happens, more validity is granted to the totality. It is a system of give and take, as long as it serves the same goal. The extra links on your chain come from the closing in of the fence that surrounds you.

Any action which seeks to reform the system will merely end up as the basis for more exploitation and constraint in another area/time. We must refuse to separate the past and future of our society, for it is all the same. We are the product of one ideology with many faces, and until the whole is taken on, we will find ourselves at arms with a new face.

Against Cities

City n., pl -ies. 1. A large or important town. 2. An incorporated municipality, usually governed by a Mayor or Council. 3. A physical manifestation of humankind's war on nature.

Every year, states pour more and more money into "fixing things up." There are always people fixing cracks in sidewalks, streets, highways, etc. But it's all still there. Pouring more and more money and resources into cracks, and yet they never go away.

Every year, building owners pour more and more money into "fixing things up." Foundations shift and crack, windows need replaced, walls tear apart, roofs leak, it goes on and on. More money goes into the hole that magically appears again years later.

Every year, more and more money goes into therapy to try to "fix things up." There are new mental diseases being found all the time. Billions of dollars of pharmaceuticals sold, suicide goes up, escapism is at an all time high, and people just aren't happy. Year after year money goes in and the people loose out.

Every year, more and more money goes into waste disposal to "fix things up." Population rises, people eat, people defecate, and people throw things away. It begins to add up. Sewage drains flood, pipes bust, landfills stink, and our trash covers the earth. More and more money goes in, as do chemicals go into our body, back out, then in the air, water and soil again.

Every year, more and more money goes into the crime industry. Prisons are built, no one talks to strangers, more cops, more laws, more security systems, more people willing to kill for and to protect possessions. More and more money goes in, less people go out, and more and more people are incarcerated.

And cities get bigger, people get scarred and move further away, and take the roads out with them. More roads, more houses, more pollution, more domination, more domestication, and less and less nature.

It all goes back to one thing, a tumor that appeared about 10,000 years ago. Big tumor, little name: stability. Not the kind of stability that "goes with the flow of things," but the literal stability. It extends more to the dependence on stability. It works like this: some people thought, "why have only a few foods we really like when we can grow as much as we want." This kind of thinking had intertwined with hunter-gatherer lifestyles, until some one decided to do it full time.

The greatest change this brought about was that this lifestyle required patterns and cycles that must be followed in order to survive. This is in contrast to previous societies, which could up and go if needed.

Obviously, earlier tribes who took this up could easily fall back into previous lifestyles (as many surely did), but as generations grew up in this way, they lost their abilities to leave. On top of this, agriculture based societies needed more land (Increase in food supply mixed with settlements equal increase in population.) and workers (The more complex the cycles, the greater the divisions of labor, the more workers needed.). So the agriculture lifestyles were generally not peaceful and easy to live by. They took what they needed, reduced options of lifestyles, created

slavery, classism, sexism, casteism, and so on. This is all further explained elsewhere and is not the main idea of this essay.

The smaller, closer to nature tribes were more able to adapt to the landscapes. But the larger the society gets, the more space required. The more space meant planning. The population needed a constant and definite food supply this requires manipulation. Nature is chaos. There is no order in the way things are, which is entirely spontaneous. It is never constant, and depends on unpredictability to keep things working. To step out of this order is to step out of the natural world. For 3 million years, humans were a part of this natural order (and some still are). Because it was perfect? No, perfection doesn't even exist. It lasted because it works. Anything that has felt otherwise has become extinct (Save the 200 species that are pushed into extinction in the process of humankind's own journey there.).

So what does this mean? Essentially stepping into mass agriculture was the first step in the path to extinction.

And what does this have to do with cities?

Cities and agriculture are products of the short-sightedness thought of "why have a little when you can have it all?" Cities are further down the path to extinction. Their foundations for existing are going against the way of the natural world. Cities are built upon stability. This is why millions and billions of dollars are spent yearly, to try to keep things "up and going." It defies the life source of Mother Earth and its permanence is quite frankly, impossible.

When highways and strip malls are built, it goes without saying that the intent is to be there forever. Nature's spontaneity is only taken into account in high-risk areas of earthquakes. This defies the root of nature, which says that things must go through cycles to maintain life. Cities and the roads, farms, etc., that allow their existence say, "we are taking this as it is now and not giving cycles a chance as long as it goes against our interests!" This is what cuts down the forests, dam rivers, make irrigation canals, paves, and so on. The civilizations that build cities are saying that they determine what Mother Nature needs in order to allow us life.

To put it softly, we aren't smart enough to figure in all the factors. We aren't supposed to be and we never will be. Mother Nature is a great mystery that cannot be revealed. If it were, there would be no reason left to live. (Humankind's defiance can be seen in their overwhelming search for the answer to this puzzle. In fact, searching too hard may be responsible for all devastation, since it looks right past all the answers we need, and takes a bulldozer down the wrong path.). This is the simple fact of life that we've denied, that denial has come back and hit us in the face every time, yet we still don't learn our lessons.

For years DDT was used since the factors of mass-produced food included increased populations of weeds and insects. Without knowing the full role these things played in nature's life cycles, the farmers saw them as enemies of productivity. Enter the world of pesticides. People from the war industry largely produced these chemicals. (If they can kill countries, why not pests?) And so they sought out to destroy every last one of them. DDT was just one of these. It did what it was designed to do and did it well. There was one little problem though it was giving people cancer. The problem was and is getting bigger though. Now it's not just DDT and lead paint, it's almost all the pesticides and microwaves and more. Is there a lesson being learned? Of course not! They can't "turn back on progress!" So instead more corporations have to spend more and more money to keep us in the dark. But they raised the stakes (Of course, that's how technological innovation works, right? "You have to break a few eggs to make an omelet.") Now

instead of pouring on pesticides, they're splicing its DNA with animals, our food and us. This is how dependency works. "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again!" "GO FOR THE GOLD!"

So chemicals are poured into our foods and us, inside and out. It goes from there to our toilets, through a series of pipes (still getting rid of the lead ones), till it ends up in sewage pipes, in ditches, in purification tanks (to get out all of the bad stuff, that we know of.), and back into human made and supervised water holding systems. During this it mixes with other chemicals and gets "processed" through other animals, evaporates and gets rained back down on us. (Have we forgotten about acid rain?) All of this so a group of humans can perform the basic necessities of eating (And this is without even mentioning the horrendous acts involved in domesticating and "processing" animals. On top of all the other brutish acts involved in getting and maintaining transportation for all of this), and processing the both.

In nature-based societies, these actions required little thought and action. They could be easily achieved, and if not, the people would pick up and go to a place where it could be done. But our society is the opposite. If its needs can't be met in one aspect, the others are all sure to feel the blow. So when nature acts in a natural cycle, it may throw this all off. A tornado, hurricane or earthquake would have massive implications, but these things just happen. Our society cannot deal with this basic fact. And incorporating it is not possible. Cities cannot be rebuilt when the foundations were made all wrong. A mountain flattened off for a Wal-Mart, will still be susceptible to erosion, like all other concrete structures built hoping the earth will freeze its cycles, will be left in ruins.

Where are the humans in all of this? Humans are animals as much as any other species. Our only difference is that we think we deserve better than the rest of the world. Why? That I don't really know. But it's not all humans that think this way. Only a small portion did, and they felt sickened that we would still live as other creatures. So they started making up stories. Stories that involved every aspect that could be seen in daily life that they could contort so that it fit their interests: to prove that they'd be given the short end of the stick. They created a higher power that granted them not just with creation, but superiority. They had to be the best, so they "fixed things up" to meet their demands. Animals weren't animals anymore; they were cats, dogs, birds, and all kinds of different species, genetically different. Then came the most important part: humans. We weren't animals anymore; we were made by gods to be gods. We deserved to be the rulers of everything and that is just what we did. Language was created and put into use so that it reaffirmed this superiority. We set up all kinds of new ideals of good and bad, strong and weak. What humans were best at became the new standard ideal of greatness. If another animal could do it, we had to too. Birds can fly, so we built planes, fish can swim, so we built boats and submarines, and if we couldn't do it, it's cause we didn't want to. Those other animals became filthy, and humans that still lived like that were below us. Missionaries tried to make them civilized, and if they didn't work, it's because they're inferior and we had the right to push them under our dominion as well. This went on and on, and now we are in the center of the ever-higher reaching climax. We went a far way up and we're finding more and more problems with being this far up. Some more possibilities went overlooked, and now some of us are starting to realize maybe there was something down there that we needed. But "you can't turn back," and this has been the way things go. So we just keep digging further and further down into isolation and depression.

Our cities are run on technology and electricity. These things require complex set ups to go. You can't just plug a stereo into a socket; you need electricity to that socket, which is powered

by a series of wires and pipes that come from generators, which make lots of noise to turn a “natural resource” into energy. And taking that energy around requires more transportation. Which means more gas and more gas stations, or trains, planes, etc. All plentiful, all very noisy, and all taking whatever they need from the earth and leaving things the earth doesn’t need behind.

Cities are built on property, which is central to the ideas of civilization. Nature provides life sources, we can control the amount that we get though by partaking in a hierarchal society that gives us more of the things we want and less of what we don’t. We, of course, have to make some sacrifices, but we get more of the stuff we want, and the stuff we don’t want is spread out more. So through the long process, we loose our long term interests and needs, but get some of our manufactured needs gratified immediately (or at least, after working to save up the money need to buy them, on top of the money needed to pay for living the life style which accommodates working for that money, on top of all the time it takes to fulfill these activities, etc.). So what to do with all this stuff? What if some people don’t want to put in all the time and effort that you did? Well, you need to protect it. You need to put it in a place that’s for you. You can’t really do that out in the forest, at least not for this many people. You need housing, you need security systems for your housing, you need housing that keeps other non-human “thieves” away, and you need something that is comfortable enough to contain you with all your stuff. Our current cities are the highest technology on the line in keeping people’s stuff, and more and more, keeping the people who own the stuff tied up with it. So in order to have more of the things we like the best, we’re all tied up in our little sections of the world that we work too long to borrow for high prices off someone who claimed it as theirs. It gets pretty lonely up here. We’ve got more crap than we ever needed, computers and TVs to keep us company, faceless and emotionless music to give us an outlet, hollow relationships, videos of the relationships we wish we had that are filled with drama, hot sex, and a happy ending. Everyone is saying that “we’ve never had it better!” The rate of suicide, mental illness, overwork, debt, depression, and just outright disgust seem to say different.

The field of eco-psychology has done wonders to open up the obvious thing missing here: nature. If you go into the woods: you feel it, when you spend time in the desert: you feel it, when animals surround you: you feel it. There is something there in nature that we’re not getting here. We’re loosing contact with the earth and with each other. We’re pouring out to people that we’ve never seen or met, over the “information superhighway,” built by the US military in order to never have to actually send real people into combat to blow away an enemy nation (who are after our stuff, of course). We’ve never had more stuff, but we’ve never been so emotionally dead. We stare at screens flashing ads, dead people and images to over-sex our sexual repression, stimulating our brains so much that we don’t even notice anymore. The machinery that runs our lives for us constantly makes so much noise that we don’t even notice that we’re going deaf and loosing our sanity to the constant ringing. We notice once we’re born that we are taken into existence for someone else’s reasons, and for this we almost never become whole. Our lives are so full of crap that we have no meaning anymore. All this to try to fulfill the impossible idea that we need to attain perfection, all this so we can live in the filth holes of the world, and kill what remains of the wild so we never have to do anything for ourselves. We march off to school to be detained, to work so we can push ourselves over the limit to get more stuff in the end, into retirement, if we don’t die first, so we can dwindle off our last years and dollars. We’re setting up an impossible goal for ourselves. There’s a high point that we will never achieve, but are willing to die, and in some cases, kill for, and what for? The rest of the planet, ourselves included, was happy and

working for more time than we could imagine. We weren't perfect, but we got what we wanted and didn't destroy it all for others in trying to do so. So why keep the towers that push us into spending eternity trying to hold them up? There was something there that worked, and it kept things going because it was right.

So where to now? Do we keep going on as we've done before and hope the next technology, the next "fix it all" pill, will work and undo everything else, without any negative side effects? Why don't we look back and say, "this was a mistake from the start and we can't go on like this." It's not some big loss on our part, everything we need is still in nature, less accessible obviously, but nature will heal itself. We give up our crap to live lives without the great void lingering over our pathetic existence. We have to take back our lives from those who profit from us being in this hollowed state and not let them get the chance to take it back. We have to abandon our empire as those in the past had. It is flawed and unsalvageable, so we need to find a way back into step one and stay there. The only thing between here and there is the thought that what we are doing is right, and that we can't turn back. So we're at a crucial point now, do we keep going and let extinction tell us the right answer, or do we step out of our hole and into life. The boat is sinking, are you going to drown with it?

Pacifism as a Deterrent to Peace

Nowadays, the banner of 'Peace' covers the sheer cowardice of the 'movement'. The pacifistic mindsets which confuse ought with is could serve to be the greatest detriment to the actual achievement of peace.

It seems the 'progressive communities' (and even some self proclaimed 'radicals'), have confused peace, as a time in which no war is occurring, with the system's official definitions of peace, as a period in which no war is officially declared (which tends to be more narrowed in even more by pertaining to only that systems' involvement). The result ends in a complete exemption from conflict as opposed to fighting for the end goal of peace. This isn't to say the entire 'peace movement' disregards unofficial warring acts (strategic military offenses) as a state of peace, but to critique the 'movements' armor of pacifism.

The long held catchphrase that violence begets more violence has become a clearer indication at the level of self removal that the 'peace movement' currently holds. The fact that those involved can refrain from health or life threatening confrontation does not question the warring ideology of civilization, it merely mirrors the very stratification which makes allowances for such ideologies.

As long as there is civilization, there is always war. There will always be a continuous effort on the part of the civilization to control every aspect of life and to wipe out all alternate ways of being. This is inherently a thorough assault on nature and it's communities since civilization spreads from anthropocentrism. This separation put into practice is a declaration of war, it is saying this is how we will exist at all costs. The abolition of this ideology and practice will be the only true peace.

The 'peace movement' also suffers mass delusion in confusing violence with war. 'Violence' has been redefined as any action which inflicts pain on others. This is something that will always be inherent in life. The community of life requires this kind of 'violence' in order to sustain and enrich itself. It is perfectly natural for these things to happen. The violence that is problematic is the systematic violence that is required by civilization. The violence that flows from the ideologies of the totality are the physical acts that constitute war. Individual acts of pain and death for the community of life should never be confused with this.

It is with this that the 'peace movement' should stay out of the hollow shell of pacifism and be willing to defend the community of life which is peace. It is personal and it is universal.

We can no longer separate from the war of civilization and its systematic violence and seep into the comforts that it provided. We should embrace the rage and passions that connects to the community of life. It is from this that we can reemerge to fight for what it is in our hearts to do.

We must break the ideological taboos placed before us by civilization and fight by whatever means necessary for the sake of our lives, our future, and our community of life.

The Witch and the Wildness

The mainstay of our global civilization is the energy that flows through outlets into our walls. The fact that our global civilization exists is primarily because we keep plugging in. So why do it? When we turn on a light switch do we think about leaks in nuclear power plants, mountains stripped of their peaks with nothing but steel tracks and dead canaries left inside, do we think about 6 million birds who die yearly in the U.S. alone because they flew into microwave towers high above the tree lines, do we think about the wildness that constantly tries to seep through cracks in the concrete? Do we think about the wildness within us that turns into boiling rage because we compromise life for survival? Of course not, because if we did, we would be out there bashing everything that stands in the way of autonomy. Spiritually speaking, we are dead.

Domestication is the destruction of the soul. It takes a wild being and turns it into a piece of the global machinery: we become a part of the machine, mentally and physically. It is no easy process, but it is one we are all familiar with. A process we all feel with deep agony when we say 'thanks' for being handed a paycheck. But in the eyes of the civilizers, it is a necessary process. It's necessary because we aren't born thinking that power is necessary or justified anymore now than we did ten thousand or a million years ago. We have to be tricked into believing in it.

The key to holding power is a good justification. A good justification doesn't need to be true; it just needs to be believable. This is as true for chiefs on the Trobriand Islands as it is for Bush Jr. The best reason for having standing armies then seems to be the age old fear of 'barbarians at the gate': the fear of the chaos and wildness that lurks just beyond the walls, borders, fences, or clearing. Bush Juniors' 'terrorists' are really just filling the slot of the 'Other'. For McCarthy and Reagan it was 'communists', Nazis had 'Jews', Colonialists had 'Savages', and as Clyde Kluckhohn writes, the Navaho, like so many other (stateless and statist) societies had 'witches' (1944, 89–90).

The antagonistic split between the self and the 'Other' then lies at the heart of domestication. To defend 'territory' or to turn a wild plant or animal into your 'property' requires that you not only see it as different, but inferior (Duerr 1985, Tucker 2002). This isn't to say that 'true primitives' don't recognize that they aren't plants or animals, but the relationship with the 'Other' isn't antagonistic or necessarily important: that comes with domestication.

James Woodburn made the important observation that societies can be split into two primary groups: based either on immediate or delayed return/gratification (Woodburn 1982). Put simply, there are egalitarian (meaning all people have equal access to necessities) and non-egalitarian societies (where there is a ranked system of access) respectively. In immediate return societies, there are no barriers to getting what you need when you need it. There is no mediating system and all people have the skills necessary to meet their 'needs'.

This is more than economics; it is about a way of living that is a constant reminder of the community of life. The separation with the other is contextual: humans are a part of life, not aside from it. There are neither barbarians nor gates; wildness is not feared, but relished. That these societies lack a belief in witchcraft should hardly be surprising, but is widely noted (Brain 2001: 211–2, Lee and DeVore 1968: 91–2, 341). As Colin Turnbull noticed among the BaMbuti: "[they]

roam the forest at will, in small isolated bands or hunting groups. They have no fear, because for them there is no danger. For them there is little hardship, so they have no need for belief in evil spirits.” (Turnbull 1962: 14) But the absence of witches is not only lack of imagination. It is not uncommon for IR gatherer-hunters to acknowledge witchcraft among sedentary neighbors, but they take no interest in it for their own uses (Woodburn 1988: 40).

Delayed return societies are a different story. The loss of egalitarianism is directly linked to three primary factors; surplus, sedentism, and domestication. Some societies have one of these, while others may have all three. These can be gatherer-hunters, but in the case of all three are typically horticultural societies. However insignificant any of these things may seem to be, they are all very important. When a society becomes dependent on surplus, it is no longer an option for people to just take freely, because for the first time something is produced. The ‘fruits of labor’ are pooled together and positions emerge for people to distribute food. This is where positions of power emerge: in small steps, access to life is removed from our hands (something so engrained in our own lives that the thought of being truly self-sufficient can be shocking).

Sedentism, or settled societies, not only counter the anti-power tendencies of mobility and flexibility (Barnard and Woodburn 1988: 28, Brain 2001: 211–2), but also challenge the ecological relationship formed over millions of years. The ‘contraceptive on the hip’ has been a powerful way of keeping populations within the ‘carrying capacity’. But when people settle down, it becomes easier to raise multiple children at one time. This settling further allows for more elaborate domestic situations. Domestication in its literal sense (accustom to the household), becomes an issue. The erosion of egalitarian relations begins to be seen in village life and architecture (Wilson 1988). Furthermore, domestication of plants and animals solidifies the superiority of the self/Other split, not only between humans and non-humans, but between ‘tribes’ and kin.

The picture here is the emergence of power and the degradation of egalitarianism. This is the context where witches, werewolves, sorcerers, and ‘things that go bump in the night’ emerge. Just as misery loves company, power mongers need a common enemy. The role of a chief is more fragile than the role of a king or president. While strict taboos can arise in their benefit, they are still accessible. When a king or president loses their credibility, they still have access to power (also, in our case, ludicrously high paid public relations experts). When a chief loses their credibility, they are often killed or exiled. So a scapegoat is needed. We have terrorists, many others have witches.

Domestication is dependency. A bad growing season, drought or plight means starvation to agriculturalists whereas gatherer-hunter mobility means they have to carry on and look for food elsewhere. For many agricultural states, droughts and floods have meant collapse (Fagan 1999), in others; it’s meant that witches and sorcerers are to blame. Not only are bad harvests and hunts at stake, but personal failures, ill health, and most often, death, are all caused by witches.

For agricultural societies, witchcraft is a common plight. Among the Azande, it’s recognized that the witches are always active, but they only become a problem when a person falls victim to witching. That doesn’t mean people aren’t always cautious, especially because a witch may not know they have bewitched you. As we stock up on canned foods and seal our windows with plastic and tape, we bear many similarities to witch fearers burying and securing possessions, excrement, nail clippings, hair, and so on, so they don’t become tools of the witches trade.

Witch accusations are a regular occurrence. Most often, a guilty witch can repay the damage of their malign substances without being killed, but this isn’t always the case. Needless to say, members of the princely class are very rarely accused of being witches, at least publicly (Evans-

Pritchard 1976: 9). So are witches a catch all category for disorder? In many ways, apparently so, but it's easy to see why. When things start to fall apart, it's always more beneficial for those with power to keep people looking everywhere but the social system. Of all people, we should be rather familiar with this.

The witch, then, is the threat of decay and opposition to the social order. Among the Lele, sorcerers "turn their back on their own kind and run with the hunted, fight against the hunters, work against diviners to achieve death instead of healing." (Douglas 2002: 207) Again this should sound familiar. Werewolves, vampires, and 'wild men' have long haunted civilized societies, lurking in the forests outside of the empire and creeping in at night (Duerr 1985, Anonymous 2003, Kennedy 2004). They steal or eat our children and souls, they threaten to carry us beyond the barriers between civilization and savagery and destroy us (turn us loose or kill us, the former seemingly being the more frightening to most).

Despite this, witches are not always used only to justify or strengthen power. The role of witchcraft is typically relative to the amount of egalitarianism that remains within a society. However, increased stress can always make it more dominant. European influence meant a surge in witchcraft accusations for the Yanomami (Ferguson 1995: 58) and the Navaho (Kluckhohn 1944), as it likely has for others. But among stateless societies, witchcraft accusations are used against further centralization of power.

Most often, the witch in stateless, non-chiefdom societies takes the role of the Trickster. It passes on justification for taboo and lays out 'etiquette' by exemplifying what is socially destructive behavior. Witches break taboo and take on the character of a 'poor neighbor' embodying such qualities as; "unsociability, isolation, stinginess, unfriendliness, and moroseness". (Lehmann and Myers 2001: 205) Among the Navaho witches primarily take part in "all secret and malevolent activities against the health, property and lives of fellow tribesmen" (Kluckhohn: 110). While at the same time offering a means of expressing these thoughts/behaviors (ibid: 85).

The witch or trickster character then is an important aspect of social cohesion (something to keep in mind when thinking about anti-authoritarian social organization as well). As a society becomes more dependent upon a division of labor and predictable circumstances, it is vital that the health of the state is seen as the health of the individual. Even in microform, nationalism is the lifeblood of forced societies. Keeping social stratification to a minimum is an important task, one where witch accusations can come in handy.

In these societies, witch accusations can be a means of social leveling. When people become more and more powerful at the expense of others, social unrest shoots up. As Kluckhohn noticed among the Navaho: "the threat of an accusation of witchcraft acts as a brake upon the power and influence of ceremonial practitioners" to keep "their capacity for influencing the course of events supernatural techniques must be used only to accomplish socially desirable ends" (111). In keeping with the "anarchistic tendencies of Navaho society" (ibid: 113), the rise to power is extinguished early.

This usage can be further seen among Shawnee nativists, who, during their revolt against Christianity and colonization in the 1750-70s, would accuse the rich and powerful of being witches (Dowd 1992: 136).

Although we can clearly draw similarities between witches among the Navaho and the Azande and terrorists in the age of globalization, it is important to look at witches in our own 'his-story'. It has often been easy for social Darwinist and apologists for Progress to point towards fear of witches as reasons why primitives were less evolved or childish and in need of civilizing (in

the form of a rain of bullets or reign of colonization). But a look into our own closet shows the European Witchcraze taking place within the birth of our beloved scientific rationality from the early 14th century to the late 17th century.

In America, the Salem witch trials stand strong in historical memory, but the 25 lives burned at the stake are little compared to other cases; in the Diocese of Como, 1,000 witches were burnt in 1523, 1585 left two villages reduced to one female inhabitant each, 1581–1591 saw 900 witches burnt in Lorraine (Griffin 1978: 15). The list goes on and on. Burnt remains are the legacy of fear. The witch as disorder and wildness was never so feared. Only now the disorder became a more obvious target.

As patriarchy became even more enmeshed in civilization, enemies became more obvious. For the first time, the witch became gendered and classed. The social deviants were the dispossessed, those whose very existence served as a constant reminder of the frailty of power. During this period, those being burnt were most likely women, the poor, homosexuals and radicals (Evans 1978, Griffin 1978, Merchant 1990). As women were further subjugated and increasingly seen as relics of nature, they would rise to 82% of supposed witches between 1562 and 1684 (Harris 1989: 238).

This period was a time of increasing unrest. As social stratification soared to new levels, the totalistic disempowerment was hardly an abstract concept. The established order was being threatened by the very backs it was built upon. Marvin Harris writes: “The principle result of the witch-hunt system (aside from charred bodies) was that the poor came to believe that they were being victimized by witches and devils instead of princes and popes.” (237) Burnt bodies gave validity to the state. Social ills had a source and, most importantly, the state was doing something about it.

Today whites fear non-whites because they are a tangible threat. Our chances of being killed in a car wreck make the chances of being killed by terrorists (Bush’s ‘evil people’ not governments of course) look ridiculous. Someone is more likely to die by having a vending machine fall on them than be attacked by sharks. But what are we afraid of? Anything but the entire system; the whole of civilization that stands before us daily, the anxiety of a machine paced world, the nagging urges to resist domestication, the microwaves that pierce our bodies in the lurking wildness. The wealth of production is our health: that is the message domestication puts into our minds. That is our burden, our crutch. Wildness, disorder, chaos, anarchy, these are the witches of civilization.

But the message here is not only a problem, but an option. By drawing on the Navaho heritage we can turn towards the persecuted witches during the Christian ritual purifications and take the cue that is being offered. Among the Navaho, Azande, Lele, Europe, and so on, when times got hard, where does one turn? If all your life, you hear of this power that lurks and exceeds the human body, why wouldn’t you try to use it? We know that this is what many did during the European Witchcraze (Duerr, Evans) and there seems little reason to doubt things were much different among ‘primitives’.

When the patriarchs of Puritanism began to preach of the evils of the lurking wildness of witches and beings that stride the fence between civilization and savagery, the dispossessed sought this out. In searching for a way out, they identified with the antithesis of state power. This is what we have to learn. In seeking to eliminate the threats of the state, those in power show their weaknesses. They unwittingly show what has always lied before us: underneath the veneer of absolute power lies a frail and fragile corpse maintained by the sweat and blood of those who are trained to see through its eyes, the vision of domestication.

Civilization becomes us; chains on the mind, scars on the body, piles of charred corpses, the yearning of an enslaved animal to smash the barrier between it and true freedom. The witches, shamans, and sorcerers brought themselves to the brink of death to remind themselves of the frailty of life and the joys of being. Drug induced trances were temporary breaks from the pain of survival sickness. They sought bewilderment, having “surrendered their individuality, renounced personal volition to the will-of-the-land, and merged individuated desire within the expansive needs of the wild.” (Moore 1988: 21)

This isn't to say that delving into new age programs, drug induced escapes or forced rewilding will break our domestication; this is actually far from my point. Rewilding is a process and active resistance is a necessary part of that. What I am saying is that the key to the destruction of civilization lies in understanding its witches, its fears. Not only looking at the external system, but domestication itself, the internalized system: the cop, missionary, politician, economist, and worker in our heads. When we look within and outside, the target before us becomes most apparent. It becomes possible to see that the plug can be pulled on this technological civilization and it will all come crashing down before us. If only we would listen.

The witch is wildness. The witch is very much alive for the witch is life itself. It smashes machines at work. It burns construction equipment under the cover of night. It stirs within us and it seeks to overtake us if only we would let it.

The civilizers fear this wildness. They lock it up. They paint it as a brutish beast that would go on a violent rampage if released. They push it in our heads. They stand strong with an iron fist, but they are weak. They know they are weak. They know, in time, the wildness will eat their monuments and swallow their pride. The witch runs rampant. And when the lights go out, beyond the reach of the state, beyond the dependency, beyond the imposed system, we will be free to let the witching substance, the wildness, become us.

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Discontents in the State of Inequality: Noble Dependents

O wo/man, whatever country you may come from, whatever your opinions may be, listen: Here is your story as I have seen it. For there exists a type of person who seeks life beyond his/her social context! Those who know the dirty lies of the great stories of oppressors, yet while feeling urges to flee the physical manifestations of such stories are compelled to remain within its bounds. Those who see the beauty of life in the hands of nature, and seek to fight the might grip of civilization from within. Oh let me tell you, it is a life of great compromise and many aren't surprised to see it end with little satisfaction, but within it holds the noble lust for the life free of fear, pressure and destruction. They hold a view so complex and important it demands immediate description.

This group of people stem from a tradition of variants, such as anthropology, radical anarchism, feminism, environmentalism, psychology, and more. They recognize that the past movements against oppression held loopholes and weak points, which would prove to be fatal to the revolutionary potential. Further examination of such issues and there historical developments brought about discoveries of utter importance: it isn't just capitalism or feudalism that brought about lives of drudgery and discontent, but the whole of civilized/reason existence! Quite an astonishing finding indeed! This led to a complete overhauling to the ideologies of inequality. It found that the origins of reason lie in the development and force of mass agricultural existence! It dug through a history of lies and deceit to uncover the realities of life previous to full time farming and stewardship of nature and all its inhabitants. It found the existence of Homo Sapiens was set up as tribes living in harmony with each other, animals and nature. They ranged from hunter-gatherers to part-time farmers. It was by no means perfect (The concept of perfection itself refuted by this group!), but it worked! Further studies have proven that this worked for around three million years! These people lived free of the burdens of civilization. They knew nothing of the world of work. The closest they came to anything similar was gathering and hunting, something that was joyous and ritualistic and occupied maybe three to fours hours of a day. These people knew nothing of property (or poverty, being the product of property), so while they didn't posses all the 'stuff' modern life has provided, they don't posses its burdens either! The ills of modern society are almost completely unknown. The plagues of our world (AIDS, cancer, suicide, war, insanity, alcoholism, drug abuse, and so on) don't show themselves in this world. Brutishness is not non-existent, but there are no forms of violence, as our society knows of it. There are fights, but no wars. There are little of grudges, and it is hardly uncommon for competitors to live as friends. Its inhabitants live life as a whole, seeking joy in each moment versus a life of seeking only ends. An overall happier life indeed!

These peoples see that the occurrence of moving from this life to our modern world was by no means of natural evolution or free choice, but of coercion and deceit. The human conquering of nature required thoroughness and the totality of thought and life. It wasn't enough to set

up a society of complex hierarchies and divisions of labor. It required stability and a constant surplus of labor. Its greatest task at hand was to control the necessities of life for its inhabitants (and those it seeks to push under its thumb). It's hard to restrain and involve a large quantity of peoples when the option of leaving is on hand. So this meant the domesticators needed more land and less competition. This requires extermination or assimilation for all societies within reach of that society which is imposing itself. Quite the horrendous situation!

They recognize the staples of modern society to be imperative to the power of the state apparatus. They see the overwhelming replacement of the natural world with synthetic society as the prime means of dependency on the state. This dependency would become the totality of state power. The people involved in it would learn to love their master, because they feared life without it! This is the ultimate success of the state. For the most part people really think that food isn't free, you can't live without money, and possessions are a symbol of ones success. They feel that technology will help them as it guides them further into the world that is built around it. The common sentiment is that the strong points of their oppression (work, money and technology) are neutral and can be used to free them as much as it causes misery. History has shown this to be incorrect, and that giving the impression that these things are neutral is the key to pushing the totality further and further into the human psyche, turning it's followers into self imposed slaves.

From birth we are set through a series of deprivations, which wedge us into the totality further and further. We are born from parents who are themselves part of this system which denies us the ability to develop fully and freely. They seek children in hopes that this will fill their own voids, and see the children not as a part of themselves and the entire world, but another possession, which can further assert their own power and worth (and this is the case primarily with the constantly shrinking amount of people who even really want the children they have birthed). This scenario is not unknown to the child, and the continuing of this cycle of deprivation and obligatory care stars making more voids in its life than it fills.

The entire culture is separated in emotional and physical senses. It does take a tribe to raise a child, but that doesn't exist here. Instead there remains the wholesale method of child raising. Rules are set as to what is right and wrong: what foods, diapers, toys, animals, people, etc. should be around the child. There are institutions that have the capability of removing children into the state's 'care' if these rules aren't followed. Quite a barbaric matter of dealing with the situation! Other institutions take on the painstaking task of watching the children for the parents and socializing them into firmly set standards, via the department of education. Here children learn everything that their parents might not have quite so high in their curriculum. A major problem here is, when you leave it up to a few trained professionals, how do they deal with all the kids? How do they take into matters, the fact that the parents are always cautious of what they do, and are willing to follow anything they deem unfit with lawsuits? There's only one way that can be done: make a strict and solid criteria that does the tasks at hand while causing the least amount of interaction outside those realms (medicines are available for those who can't seem to quite fit into it all with the others). As the noble dependents will commonly point out, this is far from the way that nature-based societies function. The children in those societies come out fully capable of taking on all responsibilities and functions needed to survive. In fact, it's not uncommon for the teens to go off and test their skills by isolating themselves for however long is needed. This occurrence goes without question or doubt, and the child is surely never bickered about why they would want to do it. The parent understands that this is something the child needs to help place

themselves in the context of the entirety of nature. Such an act in our society isn't just looked down upon: it's illegal. A child found wandering to the dependents of civilization is a fright. Either their parents obviously don't care about them and they may be in a gang or the like, or the child is lost and needs an adult to help it find its way. As the children get older, it's more important to discipline them to these rules. That is why it is illegal for anyone under 16 to drop out of high school in most states. If they do not complete a preset minimum years of schooling, they will not have received the whole process of socialization from the school. Aside from this, they would flood the job market, creating numerous other problems for the society to deal with. So in the mean time they are rendered useless by being forced into mandatory socialization. Wandering is by no means a possibility either; it's a sign of possible deviants. A curfew is set to insure that any such deviants will be put away for such an anti-social act. To further keep them under the eye of the big brother, they are forced in most states to remain under their parents care until 18 years of age (despite the situation the child faces at home).

The entire system puts a lot of power in the child's parents. They are legally responsible for their 'property,' so they have the rights to ensure that their rule is effective. This has been known to fill quite a few heads. A child becomes the burden of the parent and is treated with likely contempt. The process of becoming an adult is extended to 21 years (when the child gains full legal rights, however, this has been expanding to 23 to 25 years of age.), whereas it is almost complete at the point of puberty in nature-based societies. A child who is obviously an adult in thinking and capabilities is still seen as 'just a child.' Their autonomy is fully taken in by this and they are helpless to the situation. The parents have full legal rights to inflict whatever it is they see should be done on their child. This power shows its face most commonly in the form of constant belittling and in some cases (more and more not uncommon either) physical abuse. These years of helplessness develop a full sense of spite, distrust, and hardening to the world that should be supportive to the child's need. The realization that the world is actually against them by this point is almost totally developed. Meanwhile, in nature-based societies, the child has fully developed its love for the world and found that its place lies within it. Mother Earth provides and the now adult respectfully participates in it. The civilized child finds contempt and more likely than ever is willing to cry for help with a machine gun on fellow students. A sickening result of 10,000 years of deprivation and groundlessness!

The world created isn't a small portion of nature, but it is the entire view and knowledge of how the civilized person sees nature and all its inhabitants. The people involved are by no means able to get up and leave upon the realization that the mass of culture is a leech on every bit of life that exists. Aside from the physical forces that keep them from being able to fulfill such a given right, they are completely buried in thought that denies them abilities to exist as they had for millions of years. The basic necessities of life, food, water and air, are no longer things that exist in plenty and freely, but are products of the culture that allows them to be. Food doesn't grow on trees, it exists in cans that come from factories that can be received in exchange for paper representations of a natural substance that has been given value for unknown reasons, that one receives through fulfilling the amount of hours of work according to the cash value that is placed on their time. Water comes from pipes, which come from plants, which come from a source that weren't not sure of, but we know must of it is cleaned up. It is free in some places through dispensing units that are occasionally filled with things that may be hazardous to our health and attached to walls in some institutions. Otherwise it can be purchased in small amounts in plastic bottles from grocery stores or vending machines. Commonly it comes from large pipes

that go to places that you're not supposed to drink from, and to get them to function in your shelter, you must pay a monthly fee. Air isn't a life source; it is a complex series of letters and numbers interchanging in scientific formulas. It's real components can be located on a chart of things that can not be seen to the naked eye, called a periodic table of elements (Here you will also find that water is not your life source, but 2 parts hydrogen to one part oxygen.). Whether or not it is pure is of mild importance really, since the facts can be manipulated on either ends, but it is there and you can use it.

This is just a small fracture of civilizations ability to splice things up into little bits of information that cloud existence. Things aren't just because they aren't; they aren't for a series of scientific explanations. This mode of thought is the primary bit of information that is worked into you from day one. It changes the way you think of everything and makes everything a product. Nothing is sacred except power. Certain things possess natural power, because they are responsible for creating and maintaining you, i.e., your parents, god, governments, science, etc. This slice and dice mentality is saying one thing loud and clear, "the world is too complex for you, live in our hands and we will make sure you get what you need as long as you go with the flow." This creates dependence, which can be otherwise referred to as the totality of civilized thought. It solidifies everything that you know into one mass that watches itself whenever its credentials are put into question. It never makes mistakes, but accidents happen, and rest assured, it will make sure that those same ones don't happen again. But sometimes sacrifice is also necessary. The state of dependence is almost completely thorough throughout civilized nations. It has taken from us from birth, and it places objects in our way to ensure that we don't find out what they are and how to get around them. To rid ourselves of this entirety is extremely possible, but it's not easy to do alone. The setup of this totality is well planned so that people will try as much as possible to refrain from having to put effort into doing things. Some people see problems with the way it works, but are so lost that they are not willing to make any effort to do so.

However, there are some people who realize the entire system is what is killing the planet and all its inhabitants. They also realize that the totality has and will do everything in its power to keep these people from being heard, but this is seen as an obstacle that must be overrun. Most feel that they are capable of living free of the totality, but realize that this would still leave the whole order in place and it would continue to destroy as it does from day to day. So they feel an obligation and desire to stay within its bounds (against their own desires to be free of it) and try to tear apart the foundations of the totality. These are who we see as 'noble dependents,' for they are aware of the bounds placed on them as dependents, but will not free themselves until all others are free. This requires the sacrifice to the mega-machine of themselves and their integrity in the hopes that they will be able to bring about civil-collapse. Most feel grim in the possibilities of this happening, but realize that maybe in the next generations it will be more viable, if for any reason, that the system has come too close to the edge and is pulling itself apart. None the less, these 'noble dependents' feel that their goal is to tear at the social order, and try and wake up the mass of dependents of the oppression that exists beyond their socialized realm of thought. The reality of the situation is frighteningly grim on their side, but the groups are constantly growing as the contempt for mass society becomes undeniably apparent. They will speak regardless of their own dependence on the system (which is in a constant state of being weaned off of), and in the hopes that their efforts will deter the destruction of the planet and it's inhabitants at the hands of civilization and it's progress.

Sticks, Stones and Nursery Homes

“I wonder what it would feel like to kill mommy.”

This came from the mouth of a four year old child. Not something I pulled from the newspaper, but the child of a friend’s friend. Your completely average four year old American child. Smiling pictures, piles of toys, and loves fast food. A child I’ve seen off and on since he was born.

And he’s hardly alone.

The same day I heard about that line (which I later found out wasn’t a single thought or bad mood but an everyday topic), I heard about another friend of a friend’s child. This one is nine years old and duct taped a butcher knife to his hand and ran around trying to slash everyone. His parents hide food and drinks because he shits and pisses in them. Another otherwise average American kid.

True enough thoughts alone don’t kill. But the line between thought and action is becoming easier to cross. It’s becoming easier to kill. But the issue isn’t about being more psychologically prepared to kill. It’s about being psychologically separated from life and reality.

If these four and nine year olds aren’t convincing, you probably don’t have to look very far for much more of the same. Two years ago, in this area, a sixteen year old boy killed his brother with a hammer and went to a school dance. Now he’s a child in an adult prison who is considered hopeless.

If those stories make the local news anymore it can be surprising.

Let’s face it this sort of thing is hardly shocking anymore. Everyone wonders what’s wrong with kids these days. Most people have their theories: lack of strong morals, weak education system, or hell bent right wing parents, bleeding heart liberal parents, not enough good ol’ fashioned ass whippin’, not enough therapy, lack of attention, too much T.V., too spoiled, and so on.

It’s become an all too familiar topic and rarely do people have enough time or attention to actually try to change things (short of violence or anger). Opinions, of course, don’t always have a lot of meaning. Unfortunately sedatives do, and they’re much easier to come by. But no matter how the problem is or is not dealt with, we all know that there’s a problem. But it’s always ‘their kids’ or ‘those kids’. We all know how to look the other way.

We all know how miserable modern life can be. Knowing this is a full time job, literally. We can talk about the problems of civilized, highly technological living and safely fall back into the passive nihilism that things aren’t going to get better so we just have to make the best of it. We could always improve things for ourselves if we really tried. Or we could win the lottery.

But when we look at ourselves, it can be really easy to just stop thinking about it all. Life’s just too short and it’s easier to go with the flow. Young adult to middle age, we just deal with what we’re given. Let’s step outside of that for a moment and think about the other parts of life where we’re not just out to get ‘what’s ours’: being young and being old.

All of us have been young. Most of us will probably be old. As Future obsessed as our rationally defined reality is, it’s just as much about eternally living in that mid-range of twenties and thirties.

Or at least looking like it. Not many of us look forward to going 'over the hill'. We spend billions of dollars and thousands of hours to keep ourselves looking 'young and sexy'. We become very high maintenance.

But part of the dream of a better tomorrow is that we'll be there to live it. Happy, healthy, synthetically balanced us. We'll be slaves to the technological Future so long as it's to our benefit. We can ignore the consequences of Progress and the wonders of chemistry when it gives us stuff. We don't want to die, but we certainly don't want to grow older.

Either way, we're happy to report that modern technology allows us to live longer than ever before. This much may very well be true. More often than not though, a long life is really just a very slow death. Alzheimer's may be less of a physical condition than a psychological escape from the reality that things didn't get better.

In the First World, one of the fastest growing areas of population is the percentage of elderly people: a major selling point for Progress. But in a society that changes as quickly as ours, the elderly are quickly outdated. We keep them around for sentimental value and they're stored in tall, cheaply built filing cabinets called nursing homes where they receive the best babying and prolonged misery that money and social security can buy. Or is that tender loving care?

Once upon a time, people lived in egalitarian societies. There wasn't equality in the sense that we know it, but in the sense that there was no system of rank or worth. People were just people, young, old or in between. That can be hard to imagine. Damn hard really.

But for those of us basking in the wonders of modernity, it's hard because Progress and evolution make it unthinkable. We've naturalized hierarchy so much that we can't think of anything without it. An infant is without strength and knowledge and has no leverage or economic viability. An elderly person has knowledge but less strength. Might makes right and the strong and knowledgeable take control and determine all the rest. Any reality based off of this kind of thinking can't help but apply it everywhere. Our bosses make us feel inferior, our parents establish authority and we learn to trust experts rather than ourselves.

Somewhere something went horribly wrong.

The complete depravity of modernity is only the most obvious proof of that.

Economies breed economic thinking. We learn what is utilitarian or useful to carrying civilization forward. It's all about efficiency. When our lives are run like machines it should be no wonder that they must start and end that way, from sonograms to oxygen tanks.

All animals are born with a will to survive. Humans are no exception. Most infants will not crawl off a cliff unless everyone is convinced (and has convinced them) that they don't know better. Likewise, a baby isn't likely to cry unless it needs something. That something is not 'tough love'; it is a cry for attention. This is something most people know, but civilization teaches us differently.

This is something Jean Liedloff learned when she lived among the Yequana and Sanema, indigenous societies in the Amazon. Children were always touched and always treated with complete confidence, but were never pampered. They got what they needed without ever being told what to do and parents never expressed anger towards them. Every step children took was of their own will and motivation. She refers to this as instinctual parenting. That is something primal. Her realizations are rather universal. Should it be any surprise that few children raised this way ever thought about killing their mothers?

But civilized living is anti-primal. Children must be broken and must learn to obey orders from the start or they may never be of use. To become a part of the machine, we must start from

birth. We must learn very early the need for efficiency. And what's more efficient than complete standardization?

Liedloff saw that a baby is taken immediately from the womb into the arms of its mother. She's the first thing the child will see. It hears the familiar heart beat and feels the heat of bodies. She saw births in the hospital where children are taken in sterile hands, measured, weighed, and set alone to learn the most central message of civilization: infinite need. What it eventually gets is a pathetic substitute for being held: bottles of formula, mechanical love, noise, and the loneliness and boredom of the crib. It cries for distant parents who are eager to ensure their independence and gets more attention from soft fabric than warm skin. It learns the importance of compromise.

Confident and fulfilled children are not efficient machines. Everything must be done to undermine them.

But the psychological pain goes deeper than this. It begins at conception. It takes in the anger, hate, love and fear of its mother in a world of compromise and the misery of not being efficient enough. We are assured that children are not thinking even if the religious say that they are full beings crafted by god. They're just lower on the social ladder.

We are told not to listen to the senses. Words are more important. Science can prove it.

With this divine knowledge, we can continue to inflict the original trauma without consequence. And even better, we can take no fault for children with homicidal and suicidal tendencies.

Chemical imbalances, chemical solutions. We breed the killers and they are increasingly efficient.

We stock pile the elderly because it is our badge of success. We hide them because then we don't have to see how miserable life is when you can no longer control your body. We don't have to think about what it would be like to feel physically numb (we're actually experts at numbing our minds), to have someone help you to the bathroom, to be completely frail and not be able to do anything about it.

We visit. We bring sedatives. We do our good deed.

We think that will never be us.

Senility becomes a retreat for the elderly left with nothing. The Future that they spent their lives building leaves them in a cookie-cutter room and with a TV they often can't see or hear: another pathetic substitute. The original trauma comes full circle.

A life lived for the machine is not a life lived at all. Threats of going to hell for not working or threats of poverty were enough to make someone sell their days rather than live them. When that realization starts to set in and you're left alone to think about it, you can become bitter, sentimental, or your mind can shut down. There's not too much you can do about it at that point and when we can shove that reality away, it's something we don't have to think about either.

The problem with confident children is that they won't allow themselves to be sold. They can live in horribly inefficient ways and they can be happy. They don't need stuff. The purpose of life is something known and enacted rather than an interesting philosophical question. Or a basis for dissecting, measuring and weighing the world.

Someone raised to be confident and happy doesn't wait for the Future. They won't make that compromise. When they feel their life can no longer be lived to its fullest, they don't fear death. They know that living in fear of death is not living at all. They know that they have lived well. They are ready to move on.

In our wonderful modernity, suicide is a crime. It cuts a wonderful, mechanically reproduced life short of the bounty of Progress. It's called a pathetic and desperate act. Morality tells us that life is sacred because our bodies are the property of god. Dependent, domesticated people aren't even allowed control over themselves.

But elderly suicide is an act of confidence. It is faced with glory and seals a life well lived.

By civilized values, this is unthinkable. Death cannot be accepted any more than life can be lived. We can never give up our faith and our blind hope that technology will make us young and vibrant again. We can never give up on the Future. When our last days are drawn out by the iron lung, we have nothing but incomplete lives to think about and we aren't able to give up.

As we listen to our heartbeats mechanical reproduced and amplified, all we can do is hope for a miracle. A cybernetic fountain of youth and another day to fight off the reality that we are animals and like all living beings we will die.

But this is not the suicide of our modernity. Everyday suicides are tragic. They are tragic because the passive nihilism of our reality allows only for confidence to mean an end to a life not lived, rather than the confidence to refuse compromise and fight. It is the last and boldest act of defeat. And sadly, it is often seen as the only possibility.

Our efficiency is destroying the earth just as it turns beings into dependents. Our hope for the Future relies on ghost resources, of finding more fuel for the machine. We will kill to maintain this civilization rather than ask if its end wouldn't be the best thing for us and for the earth.

Carrying capacity, human impact analysis, and human ecological footprint, all names for studies that show us this reality is running on finite sources: that maintaining the great escape from death is running the planet dry. We've been warned that the search is running out of fuel and its end is a matter of time. As William Catton pointed out, the inevitable 'tomorrow' was yesterday. We've peaked and the bright Future of hope is fading, and quickly. If we have anything to learn about collapse from past civilizations it is that no crash landing is a good one. And most of us won't even notice till it all comes crashing down.

And all of this is for a way of existing that cannot be fulfilling. A way of being that always looks to the Future and never just is. A way of life that we create, maintain and reproduce daily.

We have to play dumb when kids talk about killing.

We say they are desensitized.

What they are is efficient.

Most often we look towards technology. That's a search in the right direction, but rarely does it go all the way. TV and video games are efficient ways of keeping kids from thinking. It makes them passive while causing sensory overload and fills in for sensory deprivation. It's a cheap and constant thrill, a fast paced adventure without any involvement.

System overload, system crash.

Children have almost always known how to kill. In gatherer/hunter societies, this is something they start at early. But they learn how about the connectivity of life: about the link between us all and the importance of not abusing it.

Zygmunt Bauman writes: "It has been perhaps the unique achievement of modern civilization to enable ordinary folks, "just good workers," to contribute to the killing — and to make that killing cleaner, morally antiseptic and efficient as never before." It is true that video games have been a virtual target practice and glamorized killing has numbed children. But these efficient killers are not full of blood lust. In fact, they have no lust, no passion, no being. They are becoming more mechanical daily.

This is not science and technology gone wrong. This is where Progress must go. This is how the Future must be. The end product of domestication is efficient dependents. As our technology becomes more advanced and creeps into every bit of life, this is how it looks.

This is the Future.

We hide animality and nature from the children. We hide everything that makes us human. We deny touch from birth. We deny confidence.

For millions of years people lived closely and without secrets. People would have sex by the fire at night and children knew and accepted it. Sexuality and curiosity were never sins nor outlawed. Children could play and experiment. They could be confident about their bodies and desires.

There was respect: the kind that exists between beings, the kind that comes together for mutual desire and not violent rage. The kind that is cooperative and not competitive.

No might, no right. No rape, murdering rampages, and death came with dignity. Life was lived and there was no compromise.

This is how things were and can be.

What separates this reality and ours is the willingness to compromise. A compromise that means our complicity to efficiency and blind faith in the Future that is killing our home and our being. A complicity that makes us do onto our children what has been done to us.

Chellis Glendinning wrote that the original trauma is domestication. It creates rage within us, but is given no safe outlet in society. It ends in battered children, relationships based on domination, dead classmates, and children born knowing that they are not wanted.

The reality that we reproduce daily is inflicted upon the planet. And each child that is born is given this burden. Part of ending this cycle of domination and submission means not inflicting that original trauma: it means refusing domestication for ourselves and refusing complacency. Most of all, it means breaking a blind faith in the Future. Breaking the morality that denies what our bodies tell us and what the earth tells us.

It means being confident. It means no compromise. It means passionate love and hate instead of an emotionless, efficient void.

The hallmarks of modernity and Progress are the nursery where babies learn the harsh lessons of civilized life: that nothing comes easily and infinite want. It ends in the nursing home where lives of devotion to blind faith drag out our last days and ensure that we never stand on our own. When we are finally ready to do so, we are no longer physically or mentally capable.

We are told that this must be better than where we were: a savage place with only sticks and stones. Where we didn't have a greater purpose in life and children and elderly were killed madly.

We think this as the empire of Progress takes over the planet, predators feeding off life so that they may one day live forever. Our fear of death is pathological. It breeds an efficient world without love. It creates morality that says we have no right to end a life that we can not give the most absolute care for in the world. A choice that carries the promise that no child will exist unless it can be given everything it needs to be confident and live fully. Or that we can end our life when we are satisfied and know that things cannot go on forever. That we can leave this world with dignity and pride.

The only thing 6 billion predatory people can do is die slowly and take the planet with them. It was announced recently that the world population will be 9 billion by 2050. The inevitability of the Future goes unquestioned. We have faith in our illusion. But our illusion has no reality.

A child recently asked me if I would kill someone if it would save the planet. He is eleven years old.

I thought, “if only it was that easy”, but you can never know how an answer might be taken anymore.

I’ve thought about that a lot though. I found myself asking if I really care enough that I might kill an infant that I could not offer everything they needed to be full. If I could break the morality, the little god in my head that said all life is gods’ property and only she/he/they could make that choice.

I was reminded of the supposed glory of Progress. Of the long life we’ve been given.

I had to wonder if I loved an elderly person enough to help them die with dignity or if I could leave them behind when they asked for it.

I think of the love these ‘savage acts’ must take. The love of the world and the love of life.

And, most of all, the confidence and passion behind them.

The Future of Progress need not be inevitable.

The original trauma, once confronted, can be challenged. We need not be victims. We can be survivors. We can be active. We can live on our own terms.

But it requires a lot from us. It requires us to stop compromising.

It requires us to stop being efficient.

We’ve seen a glimpse of where this is heading and what the consequences are beyond the daily reality that we can chose to confront or to ignore.

The question I’m left wondering is whether I would destroy the machine (the engine and lifeblood of civilization) that is killing, dominating and subjugating life.

What I’ve discovered is that I still have a whole lot of very inefficient passion and an unspeakable will to live without compromise.

The Reproduction of Production: Class, Modernity and Identity

Class is a social relationship. Stripped to its base, it is about economics. It's about being a producer, distributor or an owner of the means and fruits of production. No matter what category any person is, it's about identity.

Who do you identify with? Or better yet, what do you identify with? Every one of us can be put into any number of socio-economic categories. But that isn't the question. Is your job your identity? Is your economical niche?

Let's take a step back. What are economics? My dictionary defines it as: "the science of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services." Fair enough. Economies do exist. In any society where there is unequal access to the necessities of life, where people are dependent upon one another (and more importantly, institutions) there is economy.

The goal of revolutionaries and reformists has almost always been about reorganizing the economy. Wealth must be redistributed. Capitalist, communist, socialist, syndicalist, what have you, it's all about economics. Why? Because production has been naturalized, science can always distinguish economy, and work is just a necessary evil.

It's back to the fall from Eden where Adam was punished to till the soil for disobeying god. It's the Protestant work ethic and warnings of the sin of 'idle hands'. Work becomes the basis for humanity. That's the inherent message of economics.

Labor "is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labor created man himself." That's not Adam Smith or God talking (at least this time), that's Frederick Engels.

But something's very wrong here. What about the Others beyond the walls of Eden? What about the savages who farmers and conquistadors (for all they can be separated) could only see as lazy for not working?

Are economics universal?

Let's look back at our definition.

The crux of economy is production. So if production is not universal, then economy cannot be. We're in luck, it's not. The savage Others beyond the walls of Eden, the walls of Babylon, and the gardens: nomadic gatherer/hunters, produced nothing. A hunter does not produce wild animals. A gatherer does not produce wild plants. They simply hunt and gather. Their existence is give and take, but this is ecology, not economy.

Every one in a nomadic gatherer/hunter society is capable of getting what they need on their own. That they don't is a matter of mutual aid and social cohesiveness, not force. If they don't like their situation, they change it. They are capable of this and encouraged to do so. Their form of exchange is anti-economy: generalized reciprocity. This means simply that people give anything to anyone whenever. There are no records, no tabs, no tax and no running system of measurement or worth. Share with others and they share in return.

These societies are intrinsically anti-production, anti-wealth, anti-power, anti-economics. They are simply egalitarian to the core: organic, primal anarchy.

But that doesn't tell how we became economic people. How work became identity.

Looking at the origins of civilization does.

Civilization is based off production. The first instance of production is surplus production. Nomadic gatherer/hunters got what they needed when they needed it. They ate animals, insects, and plants. When a number of gatherer/hunters settled, they still hunted animals and gathered plants, but not to eat.

At least not immediately.

In Mesopotamia, the cradle of our now global civilization, vast fields of wild grains could be harvested. Grain, unlike meat and most wild plants, can be stored without any intensive technology. It was put in huge granaries. But grain is harvested seasonally. As populations expand, they become dependent upon granaries rather than what is freely available.

Enter distribution. The granaries were owned by elites or family elders who were in charge of rationing and distributing to the people who filled their lot. Dependency means compromise: that's the central element of domestication. Grain must be stored. Granary owners store and ration the grain in exchange for increased social status. Social status means coercive power. This is how the State arose.

In other areas, such as what is now the northwest coast of the United States into Canada, store houses were filled with dried fish rather than grain. Kingdoms and intense chiefdoms were established. The subjects of the arising power were those who filled the storehouses. This should sound familiar. Expansive trade networks were formed and the domestication of plants and then animals followed the expansion of populations. The need for more grain turned gatherers into farmers. The farmers would need more land and wars were waged. Soldiers were conscripted. Slaves were captured. Nomadic gatherer/hunters and horticulturalists were pushed away and killed.

The people did all of this not because the chiefs and kings said so, but because their created gods did. The priest is as important to the emergence of states as chiefs and kings. At some points they were the same position, sometimes not. But they fed off each other. Economics, politics and religion have always been one system. Nowadays science takes the place of religion. That's why Engels could say that labor is what made humans from apes. Scientifically this is could easily be true. God punished the descendants of Adam and Eve to work the land. Both are just a matter of faith.

But faith comes easily when it comes from the hand that feeds. So long as we are dependent on the economy, we'll compromise what the plants and animals tells us, what our bodies tell us. No one wants to work, but that's just the way it is.

So we see in the tunnel vision of civilization. The economy needs reformed or revolutionized. The fruit of production needs redistributed.

Enter class struggle.

Class is one of many relationships offered by civilization. It has often been asserted that the history of civilization is the history of class struggle. But I would argue differently. The relationship between the peasant and the king and between chief and commoner cannot be reduced to one set of categories. When we do this, we ignore the differences that accompany various aspects of civilization. Simplification is nice and easy, but if we're trying to understand how civilization arose so that we can destroy it, we must be willing to understand subtle and significant differences.

What could be more significant than how power is created, maintained and asserted? This isn't done to cheapen the very real resistance that the 'underclass' had against elites, far from it. But to say that class or class consciousness are universal ignores important particulars.

Class is about capitalism. It's about a globalizing system based on absolute mediation and specialization. It emerged from feudal relationships through mercantile capitalism into industrial capitalism and now modernity.

Proletarian, bourgeoisie, peasant, petite bourgeoisie, these are all social classes about our relationship to production and distribution. Particularly in capitalist society, this is everything. All of this couldn't have been more apparent than during the major periods of industrialization. You worked in a factory, owned it or sold what came out of it. This was the heyday of class consciousness because there was no question about it. Proletarians were in the same conditions and for the most part they knew that is where they would always be. They spent their days and nights in factories while the 'high society' of the bourgeoisie was always close enough to smell, but not taste.

If you believed God, Smith or Engels, labor was your essence. It made you human. To have your labor stolen from you must have been the worst of all crimes. The workers ran the machine and it was within their grasp to take it over. They could get rid of the boss and put in a new one or a worker's council.

If you believed production was necessary, this was revolutionary. And even more so because it was entirely possible. Some people tried it. Some of them were successful. A lot of them were not. Most revolutions were accused of failing the ideals of those who created them. But in no place did the proletariat resistance end relationships of domination.

The reason is simple: they were barking up the wrong tree. Capitalism is a form of domination, not its source. Production and industrialism are parts of civilization, a heritage much older and far more rooted than capitalism.

But the question is really about identity. The class strugglers accepted their fate as producers, but sought to make the most of a bad situation. That's a faith that civilization requires. That's a fate that I won't accept. That's a fate the earth won't accept.

The inevitable conclusion of the class struggle is limited because it is rooted in economics. Class is a social relationship, but it is tied to capitalist economics. Proletarians are identified as people who sell their labor. Proletarian revolution is about taking back your labor. But I'm not buying the myths of God, Smith, or Engels. Work and production are not universal and civilization is the problem.

What we have to learn is that link between our own class relationships and those of the earlier civilizations is not about who is selling labor and who is buying, but between about the existence of production itself. About how we came to believe that spending our lives building power that is wielded against us is justified. About how compromising our lives as free beings to become workers and soldiers became a compromise we were willing to take.

It is about the material conditions of civilization and the justifications for them, because that is how we will come to understand civilization. So we can understand what the costs of domestication are, for ourselves and the earth. So that we can destroy it once and for all.

This is what the anarcho-primitivist critique of civilization attempts to do. It's about understanding civilization, how it is created and maintained. Capitalism is a late stage of civilization and class struggle as the resistance to that order is all extremely important to both our understanding of civilization and how to attack it.

There is a rich heritage of resistance against capitalism. It is another part of the history of resistance against power that goes back to its origins. But we should be wary to not take any stage as the only stage. Anti-capitalist approaches are just that, anti-capitalist. It is not anti-civilization. It is concerned with a certain type of economics, not economics, production or industrialism itself. An understanding of capitalism is only useful so far as it is historically and ecologically rooted.

But capitalism has been the major target of the past centuries of resistance. As such, the grasp of class struggle is apparently not easy to move on from. Global capitalism was well rooted by 1500 AD and continued through the technological, industrial and green revolutions of the last 500 years. With a rise in technology it has spread throughout the planet to the point where there is now only one global civilization. But capitalism is still not universal. If we see the world as a stage for class struggle, we are ignoring the many fronts of resistance that are explicitly resisting civilization. This is something that class struggle advocates typically ignore, but in some ways only one of two major problems. The other problem is the denial of modernity.

Modernity is the face of late capitalism. It's the face that has been primarily spreading over the last 50 years through a series of technological expansions that have made the global economy as we know it now possible. It is identified by hyper-technology and hyper-specialization.

Let's face it; the capitalists know what they are doing. In the period leading up to World War I and through World War II the threat of proletariat revolution was probably never so strongly felt. Both wars were fought in part to break this revolutionary spirit.

But it didn't end there. In the post war periods the capitalists knew that any kind of major restructuring would have to work against that level of class consciousness. Breaking the ability to organize was central. Our global economy made sense not only in economic terms, but in social terms. The concrete realities of class cohesion were shaken. Most importantly, with global production, a proletarian revolution couldn't feed and provide for itself. This is one of the primary causes for the 'failure' of the socialist revolutions in Russia, China, Nicaragua and Cuba to name just a few.

The structure of modernity is anti-class consciousness. In industrialized nations, most of the work force is service oriented. People could very easily take over any number of stores and Wal-Marts, but where would this get us? The periphery and core of modern capitalism are spread across the world. A revolution would have to be global, but would it look any different in the end? Would it be any more desirable?

In industrializing nations which provide almost everything that the core needs, the reality of class consciousness is very real. But the situation is much the same. We have police and fall in line; they have an everyday reality of military intervention. The threat of state retaliation is much more real and the force of core states to keep those people in line is something most of us probably can't imagine. But even should revolt be successful, what good are mono-cropped fields and sweatshops? The problem runs much deeper than what can be achieved by restructuring production.

But, in terms of the industrial nations, the problem runs even deeper. The spirit of modernity is extremely individualistic. Even though that alone is destroying everything it means to be human, that's what we're up against. It's like lottery capitalism: we believe that it is possible for each of us to strike it rich. We're just looking out for number one. We'll more than happily get rich or die trying.

The post-modern ethos that defines our reality tells us that we have no roots. It feeds our passive nihilism that reminds us that we're fucked, but there's nothing we can do about it. God, Smith and Engels said so, now movies, music, and markets remind us.

The truth is that in this context proletarian identity has little meaning. Classes still exist, but not in any revolutionary context. Study after study shows that most Americans consider them middle class. We judge by what we own rather than what we owe on credit cards. Borrowed and imagined money feeds an identity, a compromise, that we're willing to sell our souls for more stuff.

Our reality runs deeper than proletarian identity can answer. The anti-civilization critique points towards a much more primal source of our condition. It doesn't accept myths of necessary production or work, but looks to a way of life where these things weren't just absent, but where they were intentionally pushed away.

It channels something that can be increasingly felt as modernity automates life. As development tears at the remaining ecosystems. As production breeds a completely synthetic life. As life loses meaning. As the earth is being killed.

I advocate primal war. But this is not an anti-civilization form of class war. It's not a tool for organizing, but a term for rage. A kind of rage felt at every step of the domestication process. A kind of rage that cannot be put into words. The rage of the primal self subdued by production and coercion. The kind of rage that will not be compromised.

The kind of rage that can destroy civilization.

It's a question of identity.

Are you a producer, distributor, owner, or a human being?

Most importantly, do you want to reorganize civilization and its economics or will you settle for nothing less than their complete destruction?

Taken from *Green Anarchy* #18

Collapse

For mike

The needle moves inside the vein,
piercing the skin, sliding into the artery.
The blood flows around it,
and is extracted into the tube
filled with the boiled down mixture:
part escapism, part desperation,
the mixture of misery
and loneliness,
the search.
The finger pushes down,
releasing full force into the lifeblood
what takes the place of
broken dreams.
His eyes roll back,
the relief is moving through her body,
the lust for life subsides
this is the death of dreams.

* * *

Around this body,
this frightened and confused soul,
is a box:
four walls, a ceiling and a floor.
The box is a box within a box.
The whole world of this soul
is enslaved: without bars,
without knowing.
But the soul knows something is there.

Bars surround, and the soul knows.
The box within a box within a box
is a distraction: a contortion.
This is what the soul knows
without knowing.
The soul searches for a way out,
But is misguided by what
it is told,
buried in the Future
of the box builders.

* * *

I can't say I know
what he felt,
as she injected
a syringe full of lost hope
into the desperate veins,
of the tattered soul.
I know the box,
I know the builders,
I know what the soul
was told,
for the message is
everywhere.
It seeks to destroy
dreams, hopes:
possibilities.
The boiled down
mixture of crying,
fear, confusion, lust,
desire, angst, and love,
is just what
happens to those who
don't share the
(implanted)

“Future”
— in the eyes of the builders.

* * *

The message is built into
our minds,
from birth
to death.
To the builders,
death is to be eliminated.
The builders build
so that they will exist
forever.
It pushes down
the dreamers,
so that they will
build for the builders.
It destroys the dreamers
by creating “Forever”.

* * *

The builders think
only of “Futures.”
They fear life,
because life has
beauty in the moment,
and all moments end.
The dreamers dream,
but the dream is not
separate. It is
lived.
The dreamers find a
world of possibilities,
and exist as is.
The builders have

lost their ability
to dream, and so
they search the
“Universe” for
“Answers”.
The search does not
end at thought, but
is carried out.
It builds space ships,
satellites, pyramids,
Twin Towers.

* * *

He is in another
world now, searching
through a field of
pills, sitcoms,
ten-point programs, school,
excess...
She is hoping
to find something,
anything,
to believe in,
because, to them, there is
nothing left in
this world.
(now covered
with concrete,
towers, steel,
plastic...)
The escape flows
through the veins,
the sacred body,
soul,
has been violated.

The eyes roll back,
the body convulses,
desperately
seeking
something.

* * *

The stories
he was once told, moved
through healthy forests,
(thicker than imaginable)
under a sky full of passenger pigeons,
surrounded by thick herds of bison,
air that never hurt to breathe,
water that didn't destroy your
insides as you drank it.
To her, this world
is only a tale,
a Disney movie at best.
He was never that hunter
and she never that gatherer.
Their world is much smaller
than that.
The world they had
heard of, read about,
dreamed of:
that place of
possibilities and life
is not here for them.
The builders have
convinced them
that there is no place for
dreams in "real life."

* * *

The builders buried their chance,
long ago.

They started building by
pushing tools into the soil
(the flesh of the earth)
manipulating, altering,
taming...

The builders came from
millions of years
of being an evolutionary,
ecological being:
a part of the community of life
(dreamers).

It's hard to say
why they began digging,
pushing, developing,
owning,
enslaving...
but we are left with
this, their legacy,
their Future.

* * *

The search for life, dreams,
ends in tragedy,
only to be mocked
by the professional destroyers.
They make movies, sitcoms,
internets, entertainment.
Our pain, our death,
is all potential profit.
We bond to share an
experience, this experience.
We desperately seek
each other,

and with all the high tech gadgets,
we grab nothing but emptiness
with the mild sense of hope...

* * *

The eyes roll back,
the fists move,
the anger is unleashed,
the stranger has just left
the scene, leaving only a
body count...
the professionals are left
to piece together
the 'real life' tragedy.
they are only a part of the problem

* * *

The builders start a new thing:
work.
They are now engineers, leaders,
politicians, bosses, owners.
To build an efficient Future,
they must dedicate themselves full time.
They start thinking further ahead,
"If not now, when?"
anything is possible, so they will do
anything
to ensure that they aren't effected:
removed, secluded, untouchable: Immortal.
What they build are pyramids,
monuments to themselves.
And they crown themselves
and each other, craft
Ideologies, Empires, Philosophy.
All things, all distractions.

The dreamers are a
potential for labor.
There's no benefit in
"allowing"
them to carry on as they were.
They create slavery,
they create slaves,
they justify slavery,
they convince us that it is good,
except this time they call it:
individualism, freedom, quality of life,
they call this dreams.

* * *

The builders did more than just plant instead of forage.
They created a new being, they tried to stop the world in its tracks and create a new thing.
hierarchies form, property is created, linear is emerging, life is being pushed aside for Future.

Lines are put across the planet, and militaries are created to enforce them. we stop being one,
and the world is against us. we fear, we make laws, we enforce them, we go to war, we make
steel tools, weapons, and we don't stop. we don't learn, we tear apart this planet, our home. it
starts here.

It continues:

Nations are drawn up and invaded, peoples trying to live are buried up to their head in the
sand, and a game is made of kicking them off. whole tribes are torn from each other and their
home, they are overcrowded on ships and sent over to be cheaper slaves, auctioned off, legalized,
illegalized (read: renamed), and sacrificed.

Cities are built, people pushed together so close that they have nothing left of them-selves
anymore. it drives a dreamer crazy, but the craziness is actually considered sanity and all the
"loose ends" are tidied up. it is gift wrapped and sold and exchanged and taught to say "thank
you" and "appreciate" when something "good" is done.

Morals, manners, lessons, ethics: all fancy names for obedience, law and order.

Never mind millions of years,

Never mind the millions of years humans have:

Co-existed and dreamed and embraced chaos without annihilating each other, or enslaving, or
oppressing, or creating systems, governments, cities, agriculture, fences, schools, roads, railroads,
bikes, jobs, factories, and all that other "greatness" that comes with civilization.

Nevermind the dreams...

* * *

He injects the hope,

she snorts her dreams,
he stops eating
because he thinks he looks fat,
she is suffering from liver damage,
he collapsed coming home from work,
she has breast cancer,
he can't sleep anymore,
she can't take it,
and he beat her
because he can't take it either.
She is locked up
because her searching wasn't
the right option
...in the eyes of the builders.
She knows he is dying,
and she doesn't know what to do about it.
He is confident that her options
are the best.
They are convinced that they
are happy.
So they roll their joy
up and burn it into their lungs,
while their dream world is
burned into their brain,
through their eyes, ears, veins...
He doesn't even hear
the hum of machines any more,
and she plays music full blast
because it's too quiet.
they grasp on and ride full speed,
searching...

* * *

The fate of the builders' Future

is not hard to imagine.
They can erode our
dreams, and push us into History,
but we can see where their
story (the anti-myth) ends.
It has happened before,
and it will happen again,
because the builders
aren't capable of stopping,
or wondering, or being,
they push along,
pushing all of us along.

There is an inherent flaw in civilization, and that has brought it down before and will again. the builders think that they can remove themselves from wildness, our true being. they think because they are capable of manipulation, that it will last.

They put up fences, maintain roads, rake leaves, mow lawns, put up buildings, pull out weeds...but wildness does not stop. it knows no Time, no Future, no Boundaries, and it will continue to seep through the cracks and destroy the monuments and empires.

the silt that brought life to
the (once) Fertile Crescent
(cradle of civilization)
sustained in ways that
no Science or 'Management'
could ever reproduce.
the Mesopotamians thought
it could last forever,
and so they built, dammed,
ordered and directed
the flow of the tributaries of the great Nile,
just as the hundreds of dams
infecting the veins of the earth do now.
Their empires grew and fell,
and the soil gave way.
It seems Science and Reason

can never replicate 'Nature,'
because it has lost the
sacred
understanding of life.
The domesticated animals
inject their hooves
onto depraved and overgrazed fields.
Their diseases
multiply through their confinement,
carrying on throughout the water
and infect all of us.
(depraved of all immunity
by eating chemicals and
antibiotics, wiping out
our ability to cleanse
and balance)
The cancer spreads rampantly
and blindly,
Destroying anything in
its path.
The forests are cleared
for more grazing land,
the water is destroyed,
the soil no longer produces,
the people starve and revolt,
power changes hands,
tightens the leash, and
eventually crumbles.
This fate is inherent in
Civilization,
in the attempt to move from wildness.
The collapse is coming
through the ecological excess
through the depravation
and destruction.

I have felt their
loss and confusion,
been on their search,
seen through their Future.
I have been there
as the search for dreams
has ended in another box,
the coffin.
I have seen the dreamers
crushed,
for they are around
me, and I am of them,
and I too still search.
I am among
generations of potential dreamers,
lost to the grinding noise
of civilizations' death.
And those who are injecting,
watching, masturbating,
plugging in, shooting off,
drinking and eating it,
are my brother, my sister, my friend,
family, lover, stranger,
our planet, our love:
my dreams : my life.
I breathe the toxins
of (union, eco-friendly)
factories,
I drink the (piss and shit) water
of industry,
I eat the (organic) filth
of agriculture,
I live the death

of civilization,
while it devours itself
around and of me.
This world, this burden
pushed upon me,
is eating me alive.
Killing the dreams of
children.
Sucking the hope of
all of us.

* * *

This world,
which has taken my birthright,
my dreams, my life,
and the community my
true being once knew.
I see the slaves
themselves trying to
fix it,
while it can never
be fixed, only
eliminated.

* * *

I see a world of dreams,
possibilities,
that await outside its
gates.
I see millions of
dreamers, waiting:
dying,
for just that one chance
to live.
I see this world

crumbling
and I am told to maintain it,
it is my inheritance.
(it : Future, Legacy, Progress, Civilization).
I feel the chance (again) to be
the human-animal,
to open the gates,
and I say to the builders,
to their slow, painful death,
to their nightmare:
burn motherfucker, burn.

Taken from *Green Anarchy* #12

The Message and the Messenger: FC, Ted Kaczynski, and the Resisting the Technological System

It's been a decade since 'FC' sent what would be the last bomb of a seventeen year bombing campaign. These bombs, aimed at airlines, technocrats and computer engineers, were all part of a larger message: the technological system is killing the earth and we will no longer allow this. That message was driven home when two national American papers were forced into printing 'Industrial Society and Its Future'. This is what would be called the Unabomber Manifesto.

A year later in 1996, Harvard graduate and mathematician turned hermit Theodore Kaczynski was turned in by his brother as a Unabom suspect to be later convicted and given two life sentences. In every aspect of his life, Ted was demonized by the media as a deranged and meticulous serial killer. His life was torn apart and recreated by his brother and mother to fit the media profile.

Every step was taken to shoot the messenger.

But the message would inevitably slip through the cracks. It found solace among anti-civilization anarchists, neo-Luddites, ecologists, and those chewed up and left behind by the dehumanizing technological system. For some it was a confirmation that something was very wrong about our way of living. Even more so, it was a message that something drastic needed to happen to change that.

It was a message that something drastic could happen.

For those within the technological system, that is a frightening message. That is why it is buried far beneath an obsession with the messenger. Buried to a place where most are not interested or willing to dig. Buried to a place where many would-be sympathizers have little interest in digging.

The technocrats and its media sympathizers know this. They know that the public loves a good spectacle. They love a face, even if it's a face that they love to hate. In the case of FC, that face is Ted Kaczynski. The mad mathematician turned hermit-bomber. They say he molested his bombs. They say that he bombed because of his mental instabilities and his failure to connect with other people. They say anything that will sell their story. And that is the story that sells. But it is not just their story: the corporate media has and needs no monopoly. Many would-be sympathizers are just as eager to push FC aside.

Of course that's understandable, it's easier to play along and stay on the safe side. FC was, in fact, a terrorist group. Bombing is a violent act. For those eager to sell their own ideology and prove their moral purity, these are tough issues. They think that only lunatics kill, that violence is never justified while they ignore the violence that is inseparable from everyday life within the technological system, within civilization. They stick to the drama surrounding Ted, who still has

never willingly claimed to be FC. As they see it, FC remains the product of a warped mind and we can move along.

And the reverse happens as well: Ted becomes romanticized. He becomes an icon of resistance to the technological system. A Ned Ludd for the Twentieth Century. Like any other icon, martyr or media star, the messenger becomes the message. They can do no wrong.

I know this from experience. I was drawn to Ted for apparent reasons: both of us wish to destroy the technological system and are open to any method for achieving that goal. I know I was never searching for a martyr, but even as a friend, Ted remained something of a media star. When I began writing Ted in early 2001, it was with a combination of eagerness and curiosity about who this person was and what they were trying to say. Our correspondence grew heavily, ending rather abruptly in 2004.

Through that period, my idea of who Ted is changed greatly, but took with it my whole understanding of what it means to be critical and the limits of solidarity. I've come to a greater understanding of the significance of the Unabom campaign, the subsequent trial, Ted Kaczynski and resisting civilization. The entire Unabomber ordeal is extremely important. Far too important to not give it a more critical and complex approach than the simple characterized look at the Unabomber as Ted Kaczynski: demon or saint.

The message and the messenger need to be understood in their own right and the link between the two needs to be contextualized. Whether we agree or not with the tactics, we have to recognize that FC raised the bar for the momentum against the technological system. This is what I'm interested in looking at. I'm not interested in the ridiculous debate over violence and non-violence. To me it is just another philosophical abstraction to keep us mediated from action and bound to rigid moralistic thinking: another barrier to action. This is a critical evaluation for those who are open to 'all the tools in the toolbox' to beat a cliché senseless.

The Significance of FC

To me, the most important issue raised by FC is a tactical question: how effective is terrorism as a tactic. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, even the word terrorism can be terrorizing. Due to a worsened political climate, it's become the norm to step as far away from the term and what it stands for. To a degree, this is understandable. But let's not blur facts. The Unabom campaign was terrorism: certain individuals were targeted because of their positions. They weren't necessarily targeted because their deaths would have ended the technological system, but because they were replaceable technocrats.

I want to emphasize this point. In terms of directly ending or threatening the technological system, FC would be a complete failure. 3 deaths and 29 injuries will not break the system, no matter who those targets are. The individuals were chosen carefully (though not always the victims), but what they represented to the system was a huge part of the message: engineers of the technological system will be held personally accountable for their contributions.

FC was, of course, not doing anything new or original. Campaigns of political assassinations, another form of terrorism, do the same thing. A technocrat is no different from a politician: though symbolic they are easily replaceable. It is the position, not the individual, which is targeted. Terrorism of this sort is as old as dissent. And it can be very effective. History shows us as much. It is a tactic of guerrillas and of empires. Revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries

alike have always used it. What usually determines the effect is the scale. During revolutionary periods throughout Latin America, it would be a norm to see hundreds or even thousands of bureaucrats assassinated between regimes. The US government uses it as much throughout the world as it has on radical groups like the American Indian Movement and the Black Panthers.

But it doesn't always have to be about murder. It is a tactical approach. One example a little closer to home is the animal liberation campaign Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC). Over the past few years, SHAC has grown to an international campaign with one goal: shut down Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), one of the largest vivisectioners in the world. The idea is simple: you start with the largest operation and shut them down, shaking the whole field up in the process and then picking off the others. In concrete terms, this means raiding and torching HLS labs, protesting and otherwise disrupting financial backers, and holding the individual vivisectioners and corporate bureaucrats accountable by holding protests outside their homes.

A large portion of the animal liberation contingency has distanced themselves from those involved with SHAC. They are constrained by moralistic blinders and a fear of losing their mass appeal. In doing so, they overlook that this tactic is effective. HLS is being cut off and is well on the way to shutting down. Those involved are learning a lesson about accountability. And they are learning this without direct violence.

I'm not saying that the SHAC campaign is perfect or such tactics will end vivisection. Neither is true, but this is the same tactic at work on another level. A level that Industrial Society and its Future reminds us will not end animal exploitation any more than the FC campaign would have ended the technological system. HLS can be shut down, but vivisection will not be stopped. This kind of tactic is only applicable on a small enough scale or with a massive momentum. Unfortunately, the anti-civilization and anti-technological momentums lack the latter.

But what FC lacked in quantity was compensated for in quality. Revolutionary violence is largely a thing of the past in the US. While there is an excess of surveillance and security technology, there's not a whole lot of violence directed at technocrats and politicians to really justify it. Their security is preemptive and it gives the impression of being untouchable. In the US climate, this comfort level becomes pathological: the ultra specialized bureaucracy becomes anonymous. Had the reason for the targets been given more attention, the FC campaign could have been far more effective in shaking things up. The engineers of the technological system could have been exposed as the Eichmann's of the late Twentieth Century. FC offered a mail-order Nuremberg.

Because of the media, this didn't happen. Accountability may have found its way into the larger psychological landscape, but coming right at the beginning of a massive growth in technocratic positions, the message was saturated.

And it's doubtful that this could have happened. The technological system is strong enough to have endured the loss of 3 technocrats and could take the loss of many more. While I have no real sympathy for technocrats and politicians, I have serious doubts about how effective this approach really is or could be. Fortunately, I think the weaknesses of the technological system are far easier to attack. And those targets are not human, which we'll return to.

But no matter what we think about these kinds of attacks, we have to realize that this has happened. FC has taken lives and the idea is out there.

Like it or not, the bar is raised.

The primary contribution of FC remains the essay *Industrial Society and its Future*. I think the essay really speaks for itself, so I won't give it as much attention here. But I do want to emphasize a few points.

From my reading, the manifesto really drives home two major points: the technological system must be destroyed and that any anti-technological movement must sharply break from the left. Tactically I agree completely with the first and I agree as much with the second point, but what that means for me differs greatly from what Ted has in mind and likely FC had intended. Perhaps this is the area where Ted has become inseparable from FC because of his steadfast grasp on the idea of a movement dedicated solely to the destruction of the technological system.

And this is the area where I split from Ted the most. That is because of two primary differences: 1) I don't see a revolution against technology or civilization as being any more likely than preferable and 2) that stems from a distrust of mass movements and the kind of organizations that revolutions require. A revolution, especially the kind that Ted and FC envision, needs a mass ideology and program. A revolution against the technological system will not look like a couple hundred FC's mailing bombs, but like any other revolution. That is a certain structure and pattern that has always failed.

Perhaps it is because I'm interested in destroying civilization in a totalistic sense rather than just the concrete technological infrastructure that I have such sharp differences with Ted and FC. It is in terms of tactics and targets that we are largely on the same level, but where I'm interested in going, revolution cannot go.

This all comes back to what Ted has written since his arrest. I see what Ted has written as extremely important, but at the same time, somewhat distinguishable from what FC put on the table. Perhaps this is where words and action split. But I see those actions made by FC alone as something worthy in their own right. Though they are within the greater context of Ted Kaczynski and the media, I hope that guilt by association will never result in such a significant campaign being tossed entirely aside.

We have FC to thank for not only reminding us that reform is worthless, but that the system is vulnerable. FC reminds us that behind the machine are human names and faces. FC reminds them that they are not untouchable.

Most importantly, FC reminds us that we can do something about the destruction of life.

The Significance of Ted Kaczynski

Over the years that I wrote Ted, I got a much clearer idea of who Ted is and what he wants. I don't think that anyone can question his absolute conviction and devotion to the cause of destroying the technological system. He has certainly gained my respect, but he has not earned my trust.

Ted is a revolutionary. If he indeed is FC, then that campaign, like his post-arrest writings, are a contribution to that movement. A movement which Ted seems to see himself as at least partial engineer: he's somewhat of a self-appointed vanguard. Like any vanguard, they must recruit followers for their ultimate cause. Though not necessarily lying, they aren't afraid to bend the truth to suit their needs, use things like flattery and deceit to brew their following and create like-minded engineers. I was always conscious of this and could see it in action. Ted no doubt has his agenda and will do what it takes to push it. This much is expected of a revolutionary.

He has said the same about me. But a central part of our break was his inability to sell me on his agenda.

I do want to be fair to Ted. I'm not interested in trashing him and certainly not in discounting what he has done. I raise these issues because I think Ted has put something significant on the table, even if he is not FC, and that it deserves respectful attention, but must be approached critically. Far too many folks involved in the momentum against civilization would too easily toss aside the work of anyone they found questionable.

There are a few major points that I found most significant in our letters and in Ted's writing in general. All of those points and discussions ultimately surrounded what it will take to destroy the technological system. Here Ted and I were largely in agreement, but there are differences.

As far as central agreements go, Ted does claim to be "anti-civilization":

"I fully agree that civilization is an evil to be eliminated if possible. But the problem of civilization is part of the technology problem. Civilization, in fact, resulted from a technological advance, namely, the development of agricultural techniques that made large-scale, sedentary, intensive agriculture possible. ... So the problem of getting rid of civilization is essentially identical with the problem of getting rid of a certain body of agricultural technology."

However, that certain body of agricultural technology, Ted claims, is not a feasible target. And in concrete terms he's right. You can't blow up cultural knowledge unless you destroy the people carrying it. Neither Ted nor I is really interested in that. I argue that the possibility for the survival of a large-scale agricultural society is highly unlikely after the collapse of our global civilization because of a severe loss in both knowledge and craft required and the erosion of lands that would have otherwise been farmed. If we can barely survive on a global system of monocropping, I have doubts about that system being resurrected on a large scale. I'm sure that it will happen on a micro-scale, but that's far beyond any reach I would or should have.

But there's something more here.

Ted and I share the same target: the modern technological infrastructure. It's a practical target. As Ted puts it, "I concentrate on industrial-age technology simply from considerations of feasibility. Once the System has broken down people will have to give up most industrial-age technology, because that technology can't be used without the aid of the System."

But for me, that target is a feasible concrete aspect of civilization, but it is not the only one. I'm interested in taking on the totality of civilization which surpasses that infrastructure. That is why I talk about rewilding and resisting as two parts of the same thing. I think resistance against civilization must reach into all the places that civilization does. That goes deeper than the technological system to the domestication process itself. That is a significant difference between Ted and I. Though we both agree on the face of things about this, it turns out to be different in practice.

I am interested in talking about tearing apart civilized concepts of community, but also looking at what anarchistic, post-civilization societies may look like. I'm interested in talking about how people have lived and how we can live. Not to form a blue print for the consolidation of the anti-civilization revolution, but as something to put out there, to get people thinking: to unleash the primal war of body and soul.

That means having a deeper understanding of the origins of civilization. A deeper understanding of how the domestication process works. It entails discussion, action and unmediated connection. But the room for this kind of thing in Ted's revolution is minimal. There is one target, one focus: destroy the technological infrastructure.

Ted's conviction and devotion to this point has been a major point of contention between Ted and other anti-civilization anarchists. In 'Ship of Fools', one of Ted's most infamous and perhaps his best essay, Ted was offering a glimpse of this, but I'm not sure the extent of what he envisioned really came out. That message, like the message of ISAIF, is the need "to build a movement that will be intensively and exclusively focused on the goal of eliminating technology and civilization." "But" he continues,

"we can't build such a movement unless we steer clear of the people (let's call them "victimization activists") who are obsessed with victimization issues. (That is, racism, sexism, homophobia, animal abuse, etc., etc.) These people are extremely numerous in our society, and they come swarming to any rebel movement that is halfway congenial to them."

To a large degree, he's right. Any battle against racism, sexism, homophobia, animal abuse, and, he mentions in another letter, colonialism and imperialism, in and of itself will not destroy civilization. Even more so, the vast majority of folks involved in any of those battles are not interested in destroying civilization. Those fighting for 'right's issues' are indeed fighting for civilization, as Ted rightly puts it: "The concept of 'rights' presupposes an organized social structure that has the power to tell people what they have a right to and what they do not have a right to. In other words, the concepts of 'rights' presupposes civilization." Furthermore, we "need a movement that will be completely independent of the leftists, the reformers, the pacifists, the 'rights' people, and that whole bucket of shit."

Though I'm not interested in a revolutionary movement, I completely agree with Ted about the need for anti-civilization folks to make a clear break with the left, reformists, and that "whole bucket of shit". But what that entails for Ted is different than how I see it. Considering that Ted has put friends of mine and fellow unabashedly anti-civilization anarchists such as John Zerzan, John Connor, and Derrick Jensen in that category, I had to ask if our definitions of leftism and reformists was really the same. To which Ted replied:

"Actually we may not be too far apart in our understanding of what leftists and reformists are. Our disagreements may revolve more around a point that I have not yet clearly expressed: that certain viewpoints that are not in themselves leftist may attract large numbers of leftists to movements that hold those viewpoints."

So by merely raising issues like racism, sexism, homophobia, animal enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, and all the other 'isms', we are guilty by association. These are deviations from our focus: destroying the technological system or civilization as the case may be. For those of us who have fallen under severe criticism from Ted for being leftist by association to certain causes see this as a significant difference.

All of these 'isms' are products of civilization and clearly are worth bringing up. Ted is wary of attracting leftists and their baggage, which certainly does happen, but this is no reason to shy away from the issues. Actually it works to the opposite: it contextualizes these struggles. Leftists and reformists will take note and most will prove that they are in fact the enemies that Ted considers them. But I can never understand why that's a reason for not bringing up what I see as completely relevant issues. I don't think there is any hierarchy of causes, but I know that

all 'isms' are an intrinsic part of civilization: they cannot and will not go away until civilization does. But if our resistance is going to be as totalistic as civilization, then these are issues that we need to be aware of.

But the revolutionary movement Ted sees has no room for this. Perhaps the greatest reason why is that he does not see all of these 'isms' as part of civilization, but as a part of humanity. Ted and I have argued these points to the ground, but at base, Ted views homophobia, sexism, and the like as being something nearly all human societies have tendencies towards. Some societies, he claims, are far more egalitarian, and definitely emphasizes that he would prefer societies would be, but insists that no societies are egalitarian despite what many of us see as mounds of evidence to the contrary.

His naturalization of homophobia and sexism have rightfully put some pressure on him. I don't intend on really laboring the point here any further. But with this in mind, it becomes a bit more understandable why Ted would see these issues as intrinsically reformist/leftist leaning. And, even more so, it becomes a bit more understandable why Ted's revolution isn't picking up a lot of constituents among anti-civilization anarchists.

It is important to understand that part of the reason that Ted seems hell bent on pointing out the lack of 'true' egalitarianism among other human societies is to avoid over idealizing them. In this sense, he puts the problem of over idealization in the same context of his concerns about talking of the inevitability of collapse. He fears, and rather rightfully, that if someone believed what was said, but later found a counterpoint, they would reject everything they've realized through anti-technological or anti-civilization viewpoints. Or if they think the collapse is inevitable people will "be tempted to relax, sit on our hands, and just wait for the collapse."

His concerns are valid. But what I draw from this is not what Ted draws. I see it as reason to not only be honest in our critique, action and motivations, but to not fear complexity. Too often revolutionaries are afraid that their audience understands critique better as rhetoric than those who could draw on something much larger and not always the most accessible. In this case, people will drop revolutionary thinking as quickly as they picked it up: because it was never internalized, their interactions and opinions are never given room. There's a difference between presenting your critique and opinions and presenting the right party line. Revolutionaries stick to party lines, but that's no reason why any one else should.

There's a difference between understanding how other societies work and making them into utopias. Just as there's a difference between the conviction that civilization will collapse and the understanding that we are active agents in that process, one way or another, and that role is extremely important which Ted argues as well. What Ted is saying is far from new: his framework is the framework is revolutionary thinking.

As far as I can see it, revolution will never be able to overcome civilization. We need something different. We need something that can handle more complexity and move beyond rhetoric and party lines. For me, that is primal war: a physical, spiritual and psychological war waged against civilization and the domestication process itself. It is about the world we live in and the world we want to live in.

This is something Ted knows about, but would never have made a part of his manifesto. In the interview with Theresa Kintz and through our letters, Ted talked about the relationships that he developed with the region where he lived, the animals he hunted and watched. He talked about how he was pushed over the edge when the place he had come to love was being threatened

by developers. When he realized that you cannot escape the technological system. That is what drove him to action.

It is that spiritual connection that inspires me and demands some respect. It was that spiritual connection that threw aside any philosophical quibbles about what would be the best action was needed and what morality limits certain types of action. Ted knew that something needed to be done and did something. Was it the most efficient or best action? Hardly, but it was significant (assuming again that Ted and FC are the same). But hindsight is always best. And with that hindsight, Ted offered one of his most important and controversial essays, 'Hit Where it Hurts'.

The article has its setbacks, but too often those have stood in the way of seeing what Ted put on the table: an open discussion about what the most efficient targets might be for any group seeking to destroy the technological infrastructure. And again, his rather hard-line stance on a strictly anti-technological movement comes through. He mentions that acts like smashing up chain stores and liberating animals are not revolutionary activities since they aren't threatening to the existence of the system. That much is true. Smashing chain stores and liberating animals won't bring about the collapse of civilization, but I would hardly consider them "pointless". I elaborated on this in another essay, but these are valid acts of rage and resistance. I don't think anyone would say that they would destroy civilization in and of themselves, but they do undermine the grasp of the domesticators and the order that they have imposed upon us. They are significant.

And, of anyone, Ted should be aware of this. If we only consider actions that seriously threaten the technological system to be revolutionary then FC's bombs and manifesto wouldn't be considered revolutionary either. I don't know if FC thought that the technological system would have come to its knees through that bombing campaign from the start but clearly 'they' realized that wouldn't happen in 1995 when the manifesto was sent out as an end to the bombing. The action was more powerful in what it represented than what it accomplished. It brought the message that something can be done.

And 'Hit Where it Hurts' carries that message further. Five primary targets are proposed: the electric-power grid, the communications industry, the computer industry, the propaganda industry, and the biotechnology industry. Without these, we are told, the system will collapse. For the first three, that is absolutely correct. The system cannot survive without electricity, and with disruptions in the communications and computer industry, it can be assured that the system will not be able to get back online in the relatively short time span between civilization and a post-civilized world.

The propaganda industry and biotechnology industry need a bit more attention. I can understand the grudge Ted would hold towards the propaganda industry, but fighting it has always been an excessively uphill battle. As its own target, it is far too large. Granted, I wish it would be destroyed, but I don't see it as a more viable target than the other ones mentioned in the article. Without electricity, the propaganda industry will be done, but I see little reason to believe it will happen before hand.

The biotechnology industry makes much more sense. Biotechnology and nanotechnology are both vital frontiers to the advancement and continued existence of civilization. That makes them rather clear targets. But it makes sense as a frontier of civilization. In the same article, Ted considers the timber industry to be a "side issue", and logically not a primary target. No doubt, most anti-civilization leaning folks involved one way or another with the timber industry are well aware that they are not gaining ground.

But gaining ground is not necessarily the point. Maintaining ground is. The timber industry and a number of animal enslavers, like the biotechnology industry, all stand at the frontier between civilization and remaining wildness. If one is a viable target, why is action directed towards the others not part of that revolution? It comes back to the single track attack and the difference between what an anti-technological movement and an anti-civilization momentum may look like. Desires will always determine action.

I think that is the essential difference between Ted and I, which is why I keep pointing it out. He wants a strictly anti-technological revolution and I want to see the destruction of civilization coming through an aware and active momentum. More to the point, I'd like to see a revolt against domestication in the sense of a primal war.

That is definitely reflected in our different views and critiques. But that doesn't mean there aren't major points of agreement and solidarity. In his personal views, the world Ted wants to live in isn't all that different from the world I envision. But I can't see his revolution, or any revolution for that matter, taking us there.

I wouldn't question for a second that Ted's revolution is an anarchist revolution. He is wary of all the issues I've mentioned because he's rightly concerned that attempts to completely eliminate them would lead to another system where equality is the only enforceable law. He is ultimately concerned with the elimination of overarching systems of domination. But, again, I don't think a strictly destructive front is necessarily the only one available. Critique and action can coexist.

We do have much in common. As I see it, what Ted and FC have put on the table is extremely important and far too important to lose it to differences with Ted's perspectives. Taking on civilization is a tremendous task. Along the way we're going to have to learn what it means to be critical and we're going to have to look everywhere for something to help us along the way.

And for raising the bar and bringing important tactical issues up, we owe FC and Ted enough credit to take what is most relevant from their contributions seriously and act on it.

April 2005.

Artifacts and Anarchy: the Implications of Pre-History

An Interview with Anarcho-Primitivist Archaeologist, Theresa Kintz

(from *Species traitor* #3)

In the last issue of *Species Traitor*, we opened up some questions about the role and importance of anthropology and archaeology to a critique that opposes the scientific worldview that backs civilization. Ironically, the same field that originated to justify the subordination of 'primitives' has been turned on its head over the last few decades and only recently contributed to a critique of civilization.

Theresa Kintz has been run through the archaeologist mill. Since the mid 80's she has been working in the field as a digger coming from an 'eco-anarchist' perspective and gaining acknowledgment from other archaeologists through her radical archaeologist publication *The Underground*. In 1998 she became a long-term editor at the *Earth First! Journal* where her editorial in support of the Vail arson (the first major ELF hit in the U.S.) generated more mail than anything ever appearing in the *EF!J*, including hate mail from Julia Butterfly. While at the *EF! J* she conducted the first interview with Ted Kaczynski (published jointly by *Anarchy: a Journal of Desire Armed* #48 and *Green Anarchist* No. 57–58) and pied the notorious mayor of Eugene, Oregon, Jim Torrey. Theresa has been extremely active with international green anarchist publications, wrote the introduction for John Zerzan's latest anthology, *Running on Emptiness: the Pathology of Civilization*, and is currently finishing up her dissertation on 'Radical Archaeology and the De(con)struction of Civilization'.

She agreed to respond to some of the questions that we hope to explore more in *Species Traitor*. Her view is unique as a dissident archaeologist, facing scrutiny from fellow anarchists and archaeologists, and her responses here are more than welcomed to this debate.

How did you become involved with anthropology and archaeology?

Academically speaking, by chance. Like most people, when I arrived at university I didn't know what anthropology was. After reading the course offerings I signed up for two anthropology classes and they turned out to be my favorites, along with my philosophy classes. (I think anthropology is the new philosophy in terms of its subject matter and the social role it now plays i.e. anthropology and archaeology seek answers to those grand questions about the nature of human experience). I remember the first day of my first anthropology class. The professor asked all of us to write down a definition of the word 'primitive'. She collected and read them aloud and we had a fascinating discussion about what the word meant. I guess ever since I have basically

been trying to define the primitive and define civilization, and compare and contrast the two. I do this now in all the classes I teach, to clarify what we are discussing when we call something 'primitive'.

My own working definition of the word 'primitive' would be primary, relating to an earliest stage or state; original, first, the thing (whatever the subject you are modifying by the term 'primitive') in its earliest incarnation. That way it is an almost infinite regression that necessitates addressing the biography of the object, descriptive shorthand used to extract the complex history of a thing. When speaking of primitive peoples, what the anthropologists and archaeologists have meant are peoples whose lifestyles most closely resemble the lifestyles of those hunter gatherers arbitrarily assigned the designation of 'first humans'. There are also primitive boats, primitive alphabets, primitive weapons, primitive computers...of course the term needs clarification since what deserves the designation 'the first' is always going to be debatable. But I don't see the term primitive as being pejorative, primitive does not necessarily mean simple, less complex, crude or naive. I see the use of the term primitive as an invitation to explore and discuss history.

Professionally speaking, I became an archaeologist for the most practical of reasons, I was offered a job. It was in the early days of CRM (Cultural Resources Management) and I began working in the field for a local archaeological firm just before I finished my BA. I loved the work itself — spending my days working outside, engaging in hard physical labor with a small group of people with a shared sense of purpose, the way I think humans are supposed to live. The combination of intellectual stimulation and physical exertion makes archaeology a very satisfying daily preoccupation. If one has to work, being a shovel bum is as good as it gets, I think. Over the past sixteen years I've worked on well-over one hundred sites, in 14 different states and three countries. The average dig lasts around six weeks (the longest was 7 months, some jobs would take only 2 or 3 days), so for years I lived as a nomad. The sites themselves are usually in very remote rural areas, often in forested, mountainous terrain; less often in urban areas colonized early in US history.

The archaeologist observes much about the world we live in. The essential focus understands the history of the relationship between the land and the people, trying to figure out what has happened for the last 20,000 years or so wherever we are. Because of my work as an archaeologist I have come to understand something about the chain of events that have taken us from the Stone Age to the Space Age. Now when I look at a landscape I see the history of the place, the evolution of architectural styles, the comings and goings of industries, the rise and fall of political powers, changes in technology, the fads of society, etc.

As far as why I might have found the subject matter of anthropology so interesting...I suppose that's more complicated. In hindsight I would say it was an ever present, intense curiosity about the world I live in and about 'the other'. I had been around people from 'other' cultures a lot growing up in AZ. I remember going to the homes of my Native and Hispanic friends and being fascinated by how different their lives were, the kinds of foods they ate, the languages their parents spoke, the ways they celebrated holidays, etc. And when I began studying I was living with an Algerian and surrounded by Arab culture. I began realizing that all my views were a product of the distinct temporal and geographical cultural manifestation I was raised in and it gave me a new perspective. Essentially I discovered the concept of cultural relativism and began wondering if there were any universals in terms of human experience, and since that is a big aspect of the subject matter of anthropology, I think I was drawn to it.

Can you describe the divisions within the two fields in regards to the implications of work done? Can you give a bit of a historical look at the splits?

In the US, archaeology is taught as one of four sub-disciplines of anthropology, the others are physical anthropology (study of human evolution), cultural anthropology, (study of living cultures), and linguistics (study of languages). In the UK these are all taught separately. I see anthropology and archaeology as having the same subject matter, the study of humanity in all of its diversity, throughout all of its history, across the world.

Archaeology is popularly defined by an activity, digging. The focus is on the recovery of objects and analyzing what they tell us about the lifestyles of the people who used them. In this sense you could argue that technically, anthropologists study living cultures, archaeologists study cultures of the past through the remains those cultures left behind. But they both approach the subject matter in the same way, by objectifying the subject, speaking of 'cultures' in terms of categorical constructions, i.e. economics, politics, social organization, subsistence strategies, technology, etc. Both anthropologists and archaeologists will look at these same basic elements and attempt to describe the cultures they are studying, past or present. Anthropology seems to me to be sort of an exotic sociology, and its relevance is diminishing at this point in time. Of course, the discipline's origin is recent, late 19th century, and it's directly associated with the Age of Empire when the Europeans first encountered and wrote about the 'customs of the natives'. Interesting though, one could argue that 'primitive' anthropology goes all the way back to the Greeks and Romans who wrote about the strange customs of those they encountered while expanding their early empires. Even if they were considered to be travel journals, their descriptions of the other anticipate anthropological literature.

In the US, the first anthropologists had the Native Americans as captive (literally) subjects and here is where the field really came into its own. The major audience for the anthropologist's work and their major financial supporters would be the US government, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and their work would be used to find the best ways to subjugate this population. Interestingly, the early anthropologists often lamented the loss of cultural diversity caused by the march of civilization and would write quite sympathetically about their subjects, those noble savages living wild and free in Eden. Still, they really did nothing to interfere with the cultural genocide they were witnessing. The same goes for the famous early European anthropologists like Levi Strauss and Malinowski working in the colonies of Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

Archaeology has a little different history. Even today when I tell people I am an archaeologist they usually ask me 'Where do you dig, Egypt? Rome? Greece?' Early on classical archaeology focused on investigating the major civilizations. Many people still think all archaeology is the investigations of big, sexy ruins like pyramids, hunting for the 'treasures' of gold and silver, rediscovering the art of the ancients. In the beginning, archaeology was a big treasure hunt undertaken by private, wealthy, self-proclaimed antiquities scholars and was more akin to art history than anthropology even. The earliest museums were these 'cabinets of curiosities' where Stone Age axes would be displayed next to elephant tusks and shrunken heads. Of course, we have to realize that people have always encountered the artifacts of the past, always lived around ruins, tombs, found the odd arrowhead they didn't recognize and probably had their own explanations of who made them, when, and why. The first systematic digs came much later, one of the earliest I have come across in the US is a brief report written by Thomas Jefferson who 'excavated' a Native American burial mound on his property in Virginia in the late 1700's.

I would say that it was the widespread acceptance of evolutionary theory that sent archaeology on a different trajectory. Once it was accepted that humans had evolved from primate ancestors, the quest for the chronology of events was on. At that point, humans became just another animal whose evolution could be understood by scientific research, and artifacts would be seen as the fossil record of past cultures. From then on the story of humanity would be told by the physical anthropologists and the archaeologists.

The implications of the hegemony of the scientific paradigm and the role of the archaeologist as the teller of the story of humanity looms large. There is no such thing as the archaeological record there to be deciphered like some kind of text, a definitive history of the species. It is all a matter of interpretation. The archaeologists tell stories about the past, the kinds of questions we ask and the kinds of answers we get are all influenced by culture in the present. This is one of the things the anarcho-primitivist perspective on prehistory illustrates so well. Take the same basic 'facts' of human evolution and some will conclude we live in the best possible world, some will conclude we live in the worst.

Archaeology and anthropology have naturally grown from the civilization that we are working to destroy. It has been a part of the sciences, and like other fields, has been used to justify the exploitation and destruction on behalf of expanding empires. The fields still produce a gross amount of information pointing towards the 'short, nasty, brutish' look at 'the state of nature.'

Do you feel that a field with such a history is capable of validly producing an alternative? Or perhaps, as with any other civilized tool, the fields produce what the 'scientist' wants them to?

No doubt archaeology has been and still is an establishment endeavor, and the work of most archaeologists will not challenge the sociopolitical status quo. This is one of the things I have been most critical of in my archaeological writing. Take the profession of CRM (Cultural Resources Management). CRM exists as a result of government legislation. In the early 80's a law was passed, falling under the Environmental Protection Act, that says before any construction project can be undertaken by a federal agency, e.g. Army Corps building dams, Department of Transportation building roads, or a federally regulated industry, e.g. utilities — gas pipelines are big business for archaeologists — the developer must prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS). Along with addressing the project's potential impact on natural resources, they must also address the impact on cultural 'resources', i.e. archaeological sites. So now battalions of archaeologists are sent out ahead of all these development projects to find, record, and often excavate the sites that will be destroyed by them. Obviously, archaeologists are agents of the empire, we facilitate the development projects, clear the way for the developers. We've been bought off, we work for them, our business comes before the bulldozers. For years I have argued that this state of affairs compromises our intellectual integrity.

Archaeologists could be very cogent critics of unsustainable development, John Zerzan does this quite effectively using archaeological evidence. We could argue that what we are seeing now in terms of the global expansion of civilization is ultimately harmful to humans and every other living thing on the planet. We know that, for example, the over-exploitation of resources surrounding human habitations, increasing complexity in material culture and technology, increasing social stratification, etc., are always a bad idea, socially and environmentally harmful. We study the rise and fall of civilizations, we understand some of the key features that bring about suffering, subjugation, environmental destruction, but archaeologists will not work such analysis into their reports. The archaeologists themselves will not contradict the aims of the developers, that would be biting the hand that feeds them. So most are content to do their digging

and write superficial reports comprised mostly of laundry lists of the artifacts recovered without addressing this big picture.

Archaeology and anthropology are cross-over disciplines, existing as they do at the intersection of hard science and the humanities. Archaeology really wants to be a science, and as such will make (false) claims to objectivity. When the archaeologists describe the phenomenon of civilization, they are seeking to be merely descriptive, the theories are supposed to, like all scientific theories, appear value neutral. The archaeologists say they are writing about 'what was', not what 'ought to be'. Critical reflection is seen as political and not part of the scope of archaeological research in most circles. The exception is the kind of archaeology that I do, 'radical archaeology', a relatively recent development with connections to contemporary feminist and Marxist archaeological perspectives. The radical archaeologist deliberately chooses research questions that are designed to demonstrate, for example, the history of social inequality or the history of the subjugation of women. Of course, asking these questions of the archaeological data will result in making political observations and traditional archaeologists are critical of these trends, arguing that the radical archaeologists are not being objective, which is of course bullshit, since no archaeological research is.

It's funny though, after years of speaking about AP perspectives to my archaeological colleagues, most will agree with the fundamentals of the AP arguments. The problem seems to be that people feel powerless to change anything. They might agree completely with the analysis of civilization offered by someone like JZ, but when it comes to being able to do anything to change the trajectory of civilization they will say it is impossible. That even if the archaeologists were to become more politically involved and point out the dangers of civilization, no one really would listen to us anyway. We are just putting 'the facts' out there, it's not the archaeologist's place to make value judgments as to whether civilization is a good thing or a bad thing, just to describe its evolution. Obviously this is a cop out and makes archaeologists part of the problem rather than part of the solution. I feel that an understanding of the past is an important tool for the activist. Studying anthropology and archaeology opens one's mind. It makes us realize that things have not always been the way they are now, and that there are other alternatives to civilization. It's not just abstract political theory, we know that people managed to live perfectly fine for thousands of years without cars, refrigerators, computers, telephones, etc. We can compare and contrast the overall costs and benefits of civilization the more we know about what life was like before and since. This knowledge does not require a degree, or even attending a class, people can seek this knowledge on their own. All you need is a passionate curiosity, a desire to understand the world you live in now and how it came to be this way. When I went to work at the EF! J I was not at all surprised to find that among the editorial collective and the small circle of people around it, the majority of those who did have college degrees had degrees in anthropology. I tell myself now that teaching can be subversive, it has revolutionary potential. My students will read *Species Traitor*, Jerry Mander, John Zerzan, and other AP thought and more than you might think are open to these perspectives, they seriously consider what these authors are saying. I encourage students to think for themselves, to question authority (mine included), but to understand that there are lots of different ways to look at the world, the important thing is to look, not bury your head in the sand and let the business majors and the lawyers run the world, act on your own beliefs.

So yes, I do believe the study of the past, through archaeology, has the potential to enlighten and provoke thought, even action, and I insist this doesn't require an academic setting. It is the

core idea of learning as much as one can about the world you live in that's important to promote. Of course students will have to wade through lots of bullshit and attitude in an academic setting, never trust the 'experts', think for yourself, study on your own if you don't want to do it in an institution, but it's just as important for revolutionaries to arm themselves with knowledge.

As far as what a revolutionary perspective has to offer archaeology, well, a sense of purpose. It could/should be so much more than elites satisfying the intellectual curiosity of other elites. Radical archaeologists are now pushing the discipline to acknowledge the role our narratives play in society, highlighting the role of the past, the politics of the past, in the present. I've always been at odds with archaeology over its lack of self-awareness, its reluctance to make our work relevant in the real world. It's funny, my fellow archaeologists see me as a radical green anarchist, someone who comes to do archaeology with an overtly political agenda, an outsider who has infiltrated the ivory tower, really. On the other side, because I study and work in the profession, my comrades the radicals will often see me as part of an academic establishment that defends the status quo, sort of an outsider here, too. I try to walk a fine line in order to bring these two camps together as I do see they can help each other, even if I get bashed from both sides.

Do you feel that anthropology and archaeology are objective processes? What is the real weight of the information that comes from these methodologies?

Archaeology is not an objective process at all. It seeks to objectify, but is thoroughly subjective. The kinds of answers we get depend on the kinds of questions we ask. For example, Marxist archaeologists in the former Soviet Union would incorporate a Marxist agenda into their archaeological research, i.e. look at the past in order to prove the communist theory of history was right. The dominant ideology in the US and Europe is capitalism and our archaeology helps in legitimizing and justifying it. For example, my academic advisor in the UK recently wrote an article criticizing one of the most well-known archaeologists in the world for allowing Shell Oil and Visa to be corporate sponsors of his dig in Turkey. Cambridge professor Ian Hodder's field archaeologists appeared in photos wearing baseball caps with the Visa logo on them, and Hodder was quoted as saying that 'obsidian was the first credit card', essentially suggesting that capitalism has a long history, was inevitable, a natural part of the human condition — this is horrible.

All archaeology has politics and sites themselves, the actual physical remains of the past, are often powerful cultural and political touchstones. Just think about the event that kicked off the most recent intifada in Palestine. It was Sharon's visit to an archaeological site in Jerusalem. The Taliban blew up the ancient, giant Buddhas because those objects represented a non-Islamic past the regime felt threatened by. In England, the dissolution of the monasteries required that all the old cathedrals and the icons in them be physically destroyed so the church's political power could be deconstructed in favor of the power of the monarchy. Another example is the use of archaeological research in promoting nationalism. Nations justify their existence and national identities are created by uniting people using the idea of a shared history, culture, language, etc... In Nazi Germany the fascists sought to unite people using this idea of a superior culture and Mussolini did the same in claiming the superiority of Roman culture. The Zionist argument for the occupation of Palestine is largely based on an interpretation of the region's ancient history.

The concept of people's shared past is a powerful ideological tool, this idea of an 'us' (who are right) and 'them' (who are wrong). The construction of a national identity is complicated. Some major elements would be territorial history, language, religion, political and economic organization, even food preferences. What makes an American and American, or a Palestinian a

Palestinian, what is the East, the West? Why do we even use these kinds of terms? Defining who is 'us' and who is 'them' has a lot to do with histories, this is important to understand. The theoretical perspectives embraced by archaeologists in their research is constantly changing and differs in Europe and America. In addition to radical, Marxist, and feminist archaeology there are processual, post-processual, structuralism, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, evolutionary, behavioral, all different schools of thought that frame the archaeologist's research questions and interpretation of data. In the US, since the 1970's, the 'New' or 'Processual' Archaeology has dominated the field (Binford et al, J. Steward's cultural ecology). Archaeologists here tend to look at humans as just another mammal occupying a unique ecological niche. The human subject is studied much the same way you would study the evolution of the species of wolves or any other social mammal. In a way I think this is a good thing, we have to keep in mind that we are animals after all. The object of the research is to understand human's adaptation to specific environments, and culture (economics, social organization, technology, etc.) is seen as a means of adaptation.

Archaeologists are like journalists, they ask who, what, where, when, why, how? The emphasis is on describing the 'processes' by which social organization and material culture (technology) change over time, what the catalysts for change are, looking at the appearance, significance and knock-on effects of watershed events (like the first agriculture, the invention of the wheel, writing, etc.). The 'why' question, e.g. why did hunting equipment change? Why did people start planting things? Why did they start constructing boats and traveling long distances? Are always much more a matter of debate — and much more interesting to pursue. We will never know for certain why, but hypothesizing, offering possible answers, even tentative ones, I feel, is crucial communicative action.

In Europe, where 'Post-Processual' (influenced by post-modernist theory) archaeology dominates there is a great reluctance to pursue the why questions. In my view they have essentially concluded it's all too complicated, of no real consequence, we can never know for sure, so they've just given up and do mostly descriptive work. European post-processual archaeology has also pushed more for understanding the limitations of archaeological research and acknowledged the subjective, political nature of the discipline, which is a good thing. But I've always argued against radical relativist tendencies in archaeology. I do believe there are some things we can conclude are indeed 'objective facts' based on archaeological research. They are simple, yet profound.

For one thing, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that people managed to accomplish everything they needed to accomplish on a daily basis using only stone, bone, and plant tools for the majority of our existence. To me this is a most salient fact. It proves that everything we think we need to survive now beyond that is really unnecessary. This is not to say that life before civilization was a paradise free from care or worry, without physical hardships. But on the whole, I would argue that archaeology can prove that civilization has increased suffering, rather than decreasing it. And I bet if the trees or rivers or bears were asked, they would say that the world was a lot better place before civilization. Here is something, too, I wish to touch on. Anthropology and archaeology are very anthropocentric disciplines, even though we recognize humans as animals. It would be better if there was a confluence of anthropology, archaeology and ecology. It is wrong to separate the history of humans from the history of the rest of the living things in an ecosystem we occupy. It is important to understand the interplay between all living things. I try to address this in my work.

Most of my experience is on prehistoric sites in North America, mostly in the Appalachian region. And here is another basic fact I have no doubt about as a result of my own personal

experience in archaeology. People lived here on the land for 14,000 years and left only the legacy of ephemeral hearth features, scatters of stone flakes and pottery shreds, and the occasional earth work. But what do I see on the same landscape now, after only a couple of hundred years of civilization? Dams, landfills, toxic waste dumps, nuclear power plants, cities like New York, river poisoned by acid mine drainage, clear cuts. The contrast is stark, real, unavoidable. Sure, people have always altered their environments, but the scale of the alteration of matter undertaken in modern civilization is absolutely unprecedented, what with concrete and plastic, steel and all the toxic effluent produced by their manufacture, the rate of the destruction has increased dramatically. It is there for all of us to see, you don't have to be an archaeologist.

Back to practicalities of the methodology...While there are several way to approach archaeological research in terms of theory, the nuts and bolts of the practice of archaeology is pretty standard everywhere. Excavate and record — ideally everything. We dig with an eye to site patterning of course, in addition to the recovery of artifacts. The ideal is to be able to offer a story about what a site looked like and how the people functioned there when it was occupied. Where were the houses, what did they look like and what were they made of, where was the hearth, where did they throw the garbage, how and where did they manufacture the stone tools, where did they get the stone from, where did they make the pottery, where did they keep domesticated animals if they had them, where did they butcher the animals, what plants were they eating, did they bury the dead, where, with what?

All these things are investigated using scientific analytical techniques like radio carbon dating to determine the age of the site, chemical analysis of the soil to discern activity areas, pollen analysis to examine plant remains, lithic analysis to reveal stone tool reduction techniques and sources of raw materials. All of this is description, not very theoretical or controversial, merely presence or absence of material, laundry list archaeology. And this makes it the most popular specialty in archaeological research, it is the least intellectually demanding, all lab work, measuring and weighing rocks, etc... Most are content to do archaeology that has no theoretical content whatsoever, to spend 7 years as a post-grad writing an 80,000 word dissertation describing the assemblage of stone flakes from a lithic scatter at a single site, big research conclusion? They got their rocks from a local source (duh) and the flint knapper was right-handed not left-handed! Who fucking cares?

What ends up happening in practice, in the real world of archaeology, is usually less than ideal. We always have the developers breathing down our necks to finish the job quickly. Keeping 30 archaeologists in the field for a few months seems expensive to them, especially when they don't appreciate what it is exactly they are paying for. Corners get cut, information gets lost. For example, at the site I worked on in London the terms of the contract with the developer stipulated that we would only go after the Roman component of the site, so we dug out everything else on top of it (2 meters of Dark Ages — Medieval — Victorian stuff, 1600 years worth) with picks and shovels and chucked it on the dirt pile without really looking at it. And if there were any remains of London's indigenous people (Celts) below the Roman component, we didn't look for that either. There seems to be a civilized overtone in regards to the treatment of 'prehistory' and primitive cultures. the civilized societies, upholding Reason and Science, carry over the imperialism of 'Truth' and 'Objectivity' to justify their own destruction for the sake of 'Progress,' and a part of that is pushing the sanctity of linear time and thought. Things are to be taken literally, and in a strict order with strict purpose.

By being stuck in this straight ahead mentality, searching for 'hard facts,' we downplay the social-cultural importance of myths, replaced with the documented history: the game of conquer and colonizers. Our view of the world has been twisted into one that doesn't allow for a cyclical understanding of self and being. It seems that anthropology and archaeology embody this movement, seeking a past that has been scientifically confirmed rather than one that has been passed on. For this reason we have seen numerous accounts of primitive peoples who have had to deal with cocky anthropologists and archaeologists who 'know the truth'. Is there some kind of middle ground to be reached between the two ways of being, or are there limits on either side?

The scientific paradigm, with roots all the way back to the Enlightenment, has been replacing all other worldviews in terms of its truth value since its inception. It is very difficult now to assert that the earth sits on a turtle's back, or that humans arose from dream time. Our civilization now finds the answers to the questions about the nature of existence in molecules and mathematical equations, in the biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, engineering and economics taught in institutions across the world.

Yet, I'm not convinced that traditional mythologies or oral histories are more resistant to ideological manipulation, and would assume that people always, if you were to ask them, used 'reason'. The cosmologies of the Mesopotamians or the Maya must have appeared 'reasonable' to adherents. And what is 'primitive' science? The first Iron Age metallurgy required an understanding of chemistry and physics, same with making pottery, astronomy is an ancient preoccupation, and the first domestication was essentially primitive applied biology, the earliest genetic manipulation of plants and animals. And just as some of us will resist harmful changes in society, in technology, in power relationships, today, I am sure there were those who resisted 'progress' throughout human history.

I think you touch on a very important point here. Science provides us with our modern creation myth in the form of DNA, the Big Bang, etc. — although most would argue that it is more than a myth, that our contemporary ideas about the world reflect reality more than at any other time. This is arrogant and stupid. I'm certain these explanations will not stand the test of time any better than the ones from a few hundred years ago, which we now see as ignorant and quaint. I love reading old books on sociology, psychology, biology, etc. It just demonstrates that our scientifically proven 'truths' will someday look as odd and out of step with reality as phrenology or the idea that women are the inferior sex. I can live with the fact that there is no ultimate truth out there to be discovered, only fluid interpretations of the realities we face at the moment, this need not prevent one from taking a stand.

And this is another important point illustrated by anthropology and archaeology — what does accepting the concept of cultural relativism really mean in terms of how one lives life? There have been, and still are, so many different perspectives on some of the most basic elements of living — on child rearing, on the relationships between the sexes, on the treatment of animals, and the legitimacy of authority throughout time. All we need to do is look at the differences of opinion between cultures, even between individuals within cultures, past and present on these matters and we see that worldviews are constantly changing — what appears to be a 'rational' belief at one point in time may appear ludicrous later. Even 'traditional' belief systems are evolved, certainly not static. What I am interested in is what are the catalysts for these changes and the results they have on our world.

Which traditional belief systems deserve a defense? According to the traditional belief system in the West a couple of hundred years ago, as a woman, I wouldn't even have been able to en-

gage in this discussion with you. I would not have been able to receive an education and my philosophical musings would not have found an outlet. As a political science student I studied the history of political thought from Plato and Socrates, through Machiavelli, Hobbes and Locke, to the 'Founding Fathers'. Not a woman's voice among them until the late 19th century really in terms of what we learn at university. Does that mean that women in the West thought nothing of politics for the past two-thousand years? What changed, why can I now engage in this activity? In some 'traditional' cultures, women still can't...is this wrong? How can you argue that?

This illustrates an interesting dilemma. Is one time period's or one culture's belief system, tradition, mythology, worldview, weltanschauung, whatever you want to call it, better, truer, more rational or enlightened than another? What aspects of a tradition are bad and which are good, on what do you base such a value judgment when we are all captives of ideological manipulation from which there is no escape, no objective point of reference? Which features from my traditional culture do I choose to respect and which do I reject. I have no problem rejecting the Christian myths I was raised with, the central tenets seem ridiculous to me now. I read philosopher Bertrand Russell's and other's arguments against Christianity as a youth and promoted such ideas incessantly in arguments at the dinner table with my Catholic family. But I have a harder time deconstructing, for example, a Native American or Taoist traditions where I see proponents as having a right to believe the world is really quite a different place than science says it is (and I actually feel more sympathetic to major portions of those belief systems — a value judgment, where do I get my values?)

It's best to reject all universalizing tendencies and respect the diversity of opinion that exists, and therefore I guess I have to argue the same thing about the Catholics, that they have a right to stick to their traditional mythology even if it seems irrational, that science provides evidence they are wrong about a lot of things. But what harm is done if we don't contradict the central notions of a tradition that says, for example, women should obey men, or humans have dominion over all living things. Perhaps cultures are like individuals, no one is all good, or all bad. This is one of the other reasons that studying anthropology can be as confusing as it is enlightening. When it comes to making value judgments about the merits of cultural practices, traditions, myths, where is the point at which you start if there is no objective foundation for critique?

While I do see science is just another worldview among many, I also think it was somehow inevitable that it arose when it did. Up until only about the last 10,000 years distinct cultural groups could live in relative isolation. When cultures came in contact on the peripheries of territories there could be only a few outcomes. They could merge and incorporate various beliefs and customs taken from each, or they would remain apart, possibly warring, and while they might influence each other, especially in terms of changes in material culture and technology, belief systems regarding the origins and nature of humanity, the legitimacy of power, and proper social conduct, though, might remain markedly different, distinct.

We have come to a time now, unprecedented in human history, when almost everyone through mass media, TV and so on, (which has by now infiltrated even the most remote parts of the globe) knows of the existence of everyone else. We have faced the reality that there have been a myriad of worldviews held by the people in distinct geographical regions throughout time, and must now consider the implications of the fact that there is no 'one way' of doing or looking at things. Still, diverse peoples all over the globe are compelled to merge. This is a recent development coinciding with the rise of the scientific paradigm. Science's claims to objectivity act as a way for diverse peoples to interact with one another on a sort of common ground, using a common language,

‘reason’, the scientific method, to come to a agreement about some very fundamental things. There is now a new global culture, and the new global worldview is the scientific paradigm.

Science is taught pretty much the same in universities in Zaire, New Guinea, Guatemala, China, Saudi Arabia — it is a universal language accepted mostly as a result of its utility. You need to know engineering, chemistry and physics to build an oil refinery or nuclear bomb, biology to suppress known diseases, mathematics to run a complex economy, etc. The fact that any diversity still exists in terms of explanations of what human beings are, how the world came into existence is, I fear, to be short lived now. There are no viable alternatives being offered, except in the case of religious belief systems that are now centuries old and becoming more untenable to their proponents with each new generation.

Is the scientific worldview a good thing or a bad thing? I don’t like the Christian worldview any better. I don’t like the mechanistic attitude of science, and there is certainly no inherent ethics or morality to agree or disagree with in it, with the possible exception of this notion of ‘progress’ that assures that only the backward thinking will resist its charms, oppose its supposedly value neutral project. What science does have is an arrogant certainty of its superiority in providing explanations of reality, to be a final authority. I guess it deserves to be despised just on that basis. But I still remain confused in a way, I feel I must pick and choose which elements to incorporate into my own belief system now from all of the belief systems I have become familiar with. (Note* don’t read the self-proclaimed ‘intellectual anarchist’ philosopher Feyerabend if this confusion is a real problem for you, too. I’ll paraphrase his most intriguing assertion...There is only one response to any statement that has ever been made that is always ‘true’ — it is “That’s what you think!”)

We are constantly coming up against the problem of trying to rationally argue against civilization (which I see as an outpour of ‘Reason’). But, what we find from this archaeological data or connecting with wildness at any level is a way of life that is beyond the rational/irrational dichotomy.

Those who benefit from civilization also benefit from us having to play by their terms. It seems that there are points at which these kinds of ‘rational’ argument don’t really cut it (not that there is either one or the other). Do you feel that there are certain limits to ‘knowledge’ or methods? Or that archaeology, as a science, has limits on its dependability?

I see your point about the limits of rationality. Consider all of the evidence for widespread environmental destruction as a result of the project of civilization. The scientists can put ‘the facts’ out there proving we are basically on a course of planetary self-destruction. Describing the effects of global warming, air pollution, habitat destruction, nuclear waste toxicity, over-population, etc., provides ‘rational’ grounds for arguing for changing the cultural practices producing these effects. But rather than suggesting we rethink the project of civilization in light of its detrimental impacts on our relationship with the natural world and make fundamental changes that would really address these concerns, there is this false hope that more and more science and technology will be able ‘fix’ any problems science and technology have created. This illustrates the limits, and the arrogance, of the scientific paradigm. That even in the face of cogent arguments that civilization is the sickness, there exists a belief that in civilization also lies the cure. Is this rational or irrational?

Whether or not ideas are considered rational or irrational seems to have more to do with power than the logical consistency of the arguments offered in support of one position or another. Thriving in this system of oligarchy (rule of the few) that we do requires a pragmatic, Machiavellian stratagem. Those in power will promote the science that serves their aims, and attack the science that would erode their power. It comes down to being less about the elusive, value-neutral and

objective face of science in theory, than the actualities of science in practice in the hands of the powerful. The resistance is forced, in a way, to counter-attack on all fronts and one of these fronts is in the realm of science. I see my work as taking place on this battlefield.

You are right, here we are playing by their rules, but as JZ has pointed out, as soon as the use of language became our dominant method of social intercourse we were on the road to symbolic, as opposed to authentic, association. I believe that there is a constant battle going on in our minds and bodies between rationality, as epitomized by the constant intellectualizing of existence that takes place in the realm of language, and real, authentic, sensual experience of each other and the world around us. I know I perceive this personally and I sympathize with your apparent frustration, sometimes the cacophony of voices, of opinions, is overwhelming, disconcerting, better to just act and ask questions later. I know that my inspiration for action comes more from my gut than my mind, I try to make myself trust this facet of my personality more.

In my more cynical moments I worry that my work, my writing might be so much blah, blah, blah. That even having this knowledge of the history of civilization, its costs and consequences, offering cogent arguments against it, producing archaeological evidence to support my conclusions, it is all just talk and wonder if words have the power to change things at all? Like all activist/writers, I imagine, I struggle with trying to find the best way to say things, not wanting to reproduce an ideology or sound dogmatic. Certainly the power of rational, scientific arguments against civilization is limited, the knowledge itself is obviously not enough to produce the desired effect, i.e. the destruction of civilization, or else it would have occurred by now. It takes something more than words, it takes action and part of the way that people arrive at the decision to take action is to have a logically consistent (rational) reasoning for doing so. I wouldn't argue that my desire to see civilization collapse is irrational, but the rational aspects of my motives represent only part of my commitment. My study of archaeology is 'dependable', inasmuch as my search for understanding is an ongoing process that I can always depend on to provide more food for thought.

As I said, I do not see archaeology as an exclusively scientific endeavor. I recognize the political, and even the poetic, aspects of the project of telling the story of humanity. But I do feel compelled to engage my colleagues in a debate about what effects our stories produce, do they support the status quo, the idea that civilization is a 'good' thing? Or does the knowledge we produce have within it the most damning indictment of civilization possible? I keep working because I am convinced archaeological theory and data do provide a foundation on which we can construct a profound and compelling critique that may also be used as a basis for action.

It is undeniable that a good deal of archaeological work has been digging up people's pasts. A great deal of controversy has arisen when there is the often occurrence of archaeologists digging up grave sites and tearing apart sacred areas. At what point should lines be drawn?

I will always side with the wishes of the indigenous people with regard to the treatment of archaeological sites and remains as a matter of principle. The politics of the present take precedence in my mind. I don't like nationalistic tendencies, but I understand the realities of the racist past of anthropology and abhor the ongoing political subjugation and marginalization of indigenous peoples. I can sympathize with all colonized people's desires to assert themselves politically in the present and gain control of their pasts. One interesting exercise I used to do with my students in the UK is ask them to consider how they would feel if Britain had lost WWII, the country occupied and university posts filled by German archaeologists in charge of doing all the archaeology, writing the prehistory and history of England.

Of course, there is no one voice among the Native Americans on this matter so it gets even more complicated. Some Native groups and individuals believe that archaeology shouldn't be done at all, and some run their own archaeological services or work closely with hired CRM archaeologists because they want to know the things archaeology can discover about 'their' past (and this is also an interesting question, whose past is it? It's very difficult to say that a living population's ancestors were the ones who created a 10,000 year old site, and in one case I saw the mortal enemies of a group gain possession of their opponents grave goods because the other culture lost the war and this modern tribe's ancestors then took over the site — strange, that).

And I would say that archaeologists and Native Americans would both agree that sacred sites should be protected and preserved, even though the archaeologists will go in and dig them up once the preservation battle has been lost through the government's exercise of eminent domain. Even in the legislation regarding archaeological resources it states that avoidance and preservation should be the first choice, if at all possible. But it is not a genuine sentiment as the archaeologists know that if a road or a new prison needs to be built, nothing will stop it and they will do the dig anyway.

What is the knowledge of artifacts? How does this help us?

Langdon Winner, a philosopher who writes about technology has said, "All artifacts have politics." I think this point can't be stressed enough. To choose to utilize a particular form of technology is to choose a particular form of social and political life. Take the technological adaptation of domestication. It completely changed those societies who 'chose' it. Instead of people meeting their daily needs of food, clothing and shelter by directly interacting with the natural environment as hunter gatherers do, meeting these needs was now mediated by social relationships, for the first time giving one real power over another. The origins of social inequality and the origins of domestication are directly linked. Look at how things changed once the wheel or writing was invented. In recent times, the television, the automobile, the computer — these artifacts have profoundly changed society. The things are now in the saddle and they ride us.

Knowledge of how changes in material culture influence society adds another layer of understanding. Artifacts represent the physical remains of the processes by which cultures change. I remember the first time I read 'Industrial Society and Its Future'. I thought it was brilliant on this issue of how much technology influences society. There are lots of others who have written about this, Zerzan of course, also Mumford and the Frankfurt School philosophers Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. Archaeologists are acutely aware of how technological changes, represented in the archaeological record, precipitate changes in social relationships and human's relationships with the natural world. They write now about the social life of things, how the artifacts themselves are imbued with social meaning.

Mainstream anarchism's reluctance to acknowledge the role of material culture in dictating social relationships is its great downfall. On the road with JZ we've noticed how the anarchists will always come to argue against the AP perspective and in support of the artifacts of civilization — asserting that we can have our cake (electricity, automobiles, computers) and eat it too (a free anarchist society). This is simply not true, the two are mutually exclusive. All the artifacts we surround ourselves with in civilization require division of labor and control, the antithesis of anarchy, control of a complex network of social relationships to manufacture, distribute and maintain them. Someone has to work on the assembly line, sell things to people, drive the trucks, clean up the shit, and, most importantly, perhaps, manage all of this. A free anarchist society is absolutely impossible to achieve in an industrial society. It seems so obvious to me. As long as

we hold on to this false idea that we need all of these artifacts we will continue on this socially and environmentally destructive path called civilization.

So archaeology demonstrates we don't need civilization, why do people still cling to it? To me this is perhaps the most important question to explore. How do people become convinced that we need all of this to survive, be happy, lead meaningful lives when the exact opposite is true? My hope is that the work of archaeologists, our knowledge of how all artifacts have politics, how technology influences society, will deconstruct this fundamental notion of the benefits of civilization.

Do you feel that there's a bit of defeatism in archaeology? An understanding that someone is going to dig these up or plow over them, maybe we should try and learn from them or 'preserve' them? Is there an alternative to that take on things?

I have real problems with this, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" mentality. Joining them is the worst thing we can do. What ends up happening to all this information we are getting paid to preserve? It is a well-known and oft lamented fact that the vast majority of archaeological reports produced will just end up filed in the basements of State Historic Preservation Offices, never seen by anyone again. Technically, the reports are the property of the client and the archaeologists can't release them without the client's permission. Often the clients don't want the fact that they are destroying a community's cultural heritage publicized, so it is a vicious circle. Yes, we are preserving the information, but only a very small portion of the population will ever have a chance to consider it. Archaeologists tend to publish highly technical reports that are inaccessible to the public. All the artifacts will be taken out of the community and put into storage in the basements with the reports.

The work we do is relevant to the present. People find archaeology interesting. When we swoop into a small town rural Kentucky we interact with the locals, check into a motel, go drink in the local bars. Someone will always ask what we are doing there. "We are archaeologists". "Wow, what are you doing here? My grandfather found an arrowhead once down by the creek...there is an old cabin in the woods by my house...what are you finding?" We can't say for sure whether or not making someone aware of the prehistory and history of their community will result in a life changing experience that prompts them to question authority and join the revolution, but the more knowledge people have — about the way things were, and the way things are now, for that matter — the better in my opinion. It gives a sense of perspective that is missed without an understanding of history.

I've always argued that archaeology needs to be more than elites satisfying the intellectual curiosity of other elites. I do archaeology with an overtly political agenda, a radical one. I believe the knowledge produced by archaeologists has revolutionary potential. I use archaeological research to support an argument that an anarchist society is not only possible, but preferable. I use my understanding of the history of civilization to critique it. So I've made a deal with the devil, I work on archaeological sites ahead of development projects, but always with an eye to using this knowledge to subvert the dominant paradigm, to argue for revolutionary social change. I have a very hard time relating to people who don't give a shit, including other archaeologists. I get angry with those who think it is all just about making a living and finding cool stuff. That's why I write as much about the politics of archaeology as I do green anarchism. I think all archaeologists are potential green anarchists if they would just get over this feeling of disempowerment. Archaeologists are as apathetic as most people, and it is worse for them because they know!

Closing comments.

If my study of archaeology is an attempt to better comprehend reality in order to effect change in the world I live in, so far the results have been pretty disappointing. The reality that really speaks to me does not come from intellectual engagement, rather it comes from this place I always come back to, where I am now. What grounds me, what inspires me is hearing the sound of this river in the background, seeing the way the steep, forested mountain looks in sunshine of the fall with the hawk circling against the blue sky, an occasional interaction with fox, elk, bear, deer, chipmunk, squirrel, porcupine, raccoon, possum, or skunk, learning when to plant and harvest my garden, when the blackberries, chestnuts, mushrooms, apples, pears, and grapes are ready for collecting. I look for what is real about the world in nature, where I can connect with what exists beyond the boundaries of civilization. Here I am one living thing living among other living things. Perhaps in my study of prehistory I find the world I wished I lived in, and I believe I share this feeling with others and seek to communicate with them.

I suppose all activists feel they never do enough, are always looking for more effective ways to fight. What action can I take that would make a difference? One of the things that antagonistic opponents will always say when confronted with AP thought is, "Well, if you really believe people should live that way, why don't you?" My answer has pretty much remained the same for the past two decades — I want to, I will, someday. But for now I feel I have to stay and fight, I feel my own personal escape would be self-serving at this point in time. So I write, I riot, I lecture, I study, I argue about philosophy and politics with friends and enemies, I throw pies at figures of authority and try to support my comrades. I wait and watch for signs that civilization is collapsing and hope, in some small way, I can help give it a push.

Anarchy and Anthropology

(from *Species Traitor* #3)

As Theresa Kintz points out in her interview, anthropology (referring here to the general field that consists of biological/physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics), like all sciences, is a tool of the civilized. Radical anthropologist Stanley Diamond has written: "Civilization originates in conquest abroad and repression at home." The role of science has been to justify and perfect that conquest and repression, and anthropology isn't an exception. However, through the work of anthropologists (both unintentionally and intentional) we've come to a greater understanding of the human-animal and the anarchist state we've lived in for over 99% of our existence. We come against the problem of having to work with such tools of the civilizers while trying to destroy the entire mental and physical system that originated it.

Outsiders Looking In and Away

The original anthropologists primarily worked from the accounts of conquistadors, missionaries and travelers bringing back news of the 'savages' beyond the realms of civilization. The two options that the conquerors saw for the 'primitives' was to wipe them out or assimilate them, though as we have historically seen, both have led to similar outcomes. The assimilation was spearheaded by missionaries and those who found these people had more value alive (as labor) than dead, although the two are hardly separable. The hopes of the missionaries would be to pave the way for a 'friendly' relationship and to 'civilize' the 'savages' through their God.

The work of the time would predominately be self-serving accounts of the rise to civilization from 'savagery' and 'barbarism'. The major turn would be with Franz Boas who focused on the need for direct field work around the turn of the century. Boas, a German immigrant to the United States, saw the natives of this country being slaughtered off and fast. His concern was that all of this knowledge would die off with these people and began the turn of anthropological work to recording the entirety of the knowledge being destroyed.

With Boas came the importance of describing and cataloguing aspects of people. This kind of approach is work of the scientist. Despite what good intentions Boas and his followers had, their work was entirely subjective. By describing everything that one sees, there is no kind of 'objectivity'. There is only a situation that German philosopher Hans Peter Duerr calls "riding the fence", meaning that there is a person trying to understand one reality to translate it to those in another reality. That person then is stuck in the middle, always a part of one culture and is therefore only capable of observing the other culture through their perceptions. What Duerr points to is that there is no kind of 'scientific method' that can even begin to bring about what it proposes it will. In this case, that is the field of anthropology acting as the study of humans, or as Stanley Diamond says, "the study of men in crisis by men in crisis."

The process that Boas started was furthered by Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski a few decades later after his work with the Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea. Malinowski's initial fieldwork there ended up lasting longer as he moved onto a remote island to avoid deportation during World War One. Over this period he became immersed in Trobriand culture, defining what he would later call "participant-observation". Duerr comes to mind as I can see Malinowski the scientist becoming somewhat emerged into this 'primitive' society to return to Europe. Knowing his situation wasn't permanent he always had a foot out the door in some respects.

I don't feel this wipes all validity from his work, I just feel that when looking at these cases, these are all things we have to consider. This kind of 'observation' carries with it the scientism of objectivity, believing that the wholeness of a culture can be observed and understood from neutrality. French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has recognized that while science is still myth, it carries the possibility of finding a 'factual reality'. He states: "Science will never give us all the answers. What we can try to do is to increase very slowly the number and the quality of the answers we are able to give, and this, I think, we can do only through science." Through even this rather liberal assessment we are left with the belief in 'hard facts', and while Lévi-Strauss has denied 'scientism' he has none-the-less carried its underpinnings.

Through this, all of the positive outcomes of anthropology must also be understood in a way that is independent of civilized assertions. What we have seen from the field of anthropology and understanding the problems we face now is that "[f]undamentally we are people of the Pleistocene", we are gatherer-hunters. The anarcho-primitivist critique takes this understanding very seriously, meaning that civilization is a recent invention and the effects of domestication are just a sign of our urging to return to the way of life that has shaped our being. With this, there is little reason why we shouldn't uphold this kind of information, because it speaks directly to the repressed gatherer-hunter in all of us civilized peoples. What we should always be wary of is the dry scientism that underlies the specific search that anthropology takes on.

Creating Reality

In his book, *Red Earth, White Lies*, Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. opens up questions about "the myth of scientific fact". His drive in this was to debate the well established theory that Native Americans arrived on this continent by crossing the Bering Strait within the last 20,000 years (one of the more modestly accepted estimates). In the eyes of Deloria and other Native Americans (though not all) this theory, established as 'fact', is racist. I'm concerned in certain ways about validity of some arguments which may be based on 'land claim' issues, which has been an accusation against this particular book. As an anarchist, I feel that nothing makes any specific 'land' someone's 'property', although I understand this kind of legal assertion against governments. Regardless of this possibility, I find that a lot of the arguments are worthy of heavy consideration.

What Deloria draws upon in this book are the ways in which anthropology, as a science, will pick and choose what 'evidence' it will bring into its 'factual' reality (although Deloria is guilty of this as well). This is a serious problem of all scientific understandings, a conception of a kind of 'absolute truth' which underlies all of existence (this dependency on 'absolute truth' is the reason that I would qualify most religion as science). What happens is that the possibilities for what is 'real' are framed only within what is 'known as fact' for those who are observing. A lot of people

have a hard time understanding that science is all just theorizing, in this way it becomes only possible to think of people coming into this continent through the Bering Strait. I can't say I take the 'science' side or the 'indigenous' side (since neither really exist), but I think that scientific 'fact' has limited our ability to look to other possibilities.

The problem, as I see it, isn't in trying to figure out what is 'right' or 'wrong' but realizing that a system that carries such values and can impose them upon others is the problem. I, like Theresa, have little interest in battling myths with others, and as I will point to later, feel that a mythic, ecological consciousness is important to rewilding our lives, but I feel that anthropology can be vital only in deconstructing the universalized and institutionalized myths that underlie and maintain civilization.

Cataloguing Conquest

The past of archaeology isn't much different than the rest of anthropology. The kind of observation that Malinowski brought into the fieldwork of anthropology could be said to be the basis of archaeological digs. It wasn't till after Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1859) that archaeologists would even recognize the past as existing outside the 6,000 year span that the Church allowed since 'creation'. In the new world it wasn't till Boas' criticisms came to reshape the way digs were done. Archaeological digs, as we know them now, didn't take their current form till the 1960's through the work of Lewis Binford after the 1947 origin of the Carbon-14 dating technique, explicit use of evolutionary theory, employment of cultural and ecological concepts, and the use of systems theory.

Archaeology is essentially the study of the past through material remains. The work of archaeologists can only really be useful when put into context with how certain remains are used by more recently observed peoples or common usage of similar materials. What archaeology really has to work with is finding the exact location of things in the earth. Their work is to literally dig up the past and theorize on the implications of their findings. In many ways this is working with a huge disadvantage and moving into a lot of speculation, but as Theresa points out, there is a lot that can be learned from this despite the handicap. Some have taken these findings and added to the critique of civilization, such as John Zerzan, Jared Diamond, and Clive Ponting to name only a few.

What I see as problematic here is the actualities of all of this. While I see no point in discrediting the effects of all the collected information that points to the inherent problems of civilization, I do think there may be a point when this becomes self-serving. I'm not interested in ever saying that we should stop looking, but I'm concerned that this search has overcome the possibilities that are being opened up. When I was writing these questions to Theresa, something was constantly coming into my mind; that we know that civilization is fucked up and that this is not the way of life that humans have become ecologically evolved into, but how much do we have to constantly reassert it before we do something about it. I'm not accusing these folks of not trying to do something, but I become concerned in general.

Looking into the fields of anthropology, I constantly see people like Boas who are concerned with constantly recording and cataloguing all the problems of civilization. What comes to mind is a photograph from the Vietnam War of three American soldiers raping a Vietnamese woman. The war photographer (as well as the photographer and journalist in general) have made it their work

to constantly record the destruction that is occurring, possibly with the hopes that what they have recorded may spur others to action. How much does it take before we stop just recording hoping that someone else will come along before we act? In many ways the anthropologist is just like that war photographer, watching destruction take place right before their eyes and recording it. Perhaps this is the success of domestication in disempowering individuals to feel that they can have no impact on the situation, but my interests remain purely revolutionary. I again am forced to ask what it will take before we stop being mere observers as our home and all life is being destroyed before we do something about it. I feel anthropology can serve as a weapon against the civilized 'reality', but I'm afraid that so long as it remains within scientific understanding it will seek to only make us all participant-observers to destruction.

As Theresa has mentioned, the work of the archaeologists is the business before the bulldozers. This can be a tough situation. Knowing that developers will completely destroy the land without regard would it be doing something positive to try and pull out the pieces of human past that will be plowed away? Can it serve as a kind of deterrent against developers or is a dig just another method of clearing out the land, whether developers follow or not? Most importantly, I'm concerned with finding a way of trying to stop the destruction from the start, and not trying to make the best of a shitty situation.

Revolutionary Potential

The work of radical anthropologists like Theresa, Pierre Clastres, Marshall Sahlins, Richard B. Lee, and Stanley Diamond (to name a few) is vital to moving anarchist critique and action. What is being uncovered by anthropology is too valuable to be discarded, and it is inspiring to see people from within these fields realizing the potential influence of their work. However, it is equally important to use that evidence as not just 'findings' and 'evidence'. To move beyond civilization we will need to use this kind of knowledge to reawaken the wildness that sleeps within us. Anthropology will remain vital only so long as it speaks to us and we are able to use it without becoming it.

The exact same applies to history and other sciences. I personally feel that the work of the evolutionary theorists was vital to overthrow the scientific mythology of the religious conquerors. However, as a rewilding human, I'm forced to question the potential of this finding. To what degree is it important that we 'know' the specifics of our entire past? What is important is a mythological (anti-institutionalized) consciousness that enhances who we are within the context of the community of life that we are a part of. The success of civilization exists in reducing our reality to a backdrop of things that we exist apart from.

What I'm referring to above isn't a kind of intentional ignorance or turning the cheek on 'knowledge', but to question what is a part of the human-animal. From my own understanding, a mythic, unwritten view is one that is able to flow with the world and can achieve what we'd hope to get from history and science without subjective implications on the world that we are theorizing about. The problem that is being opened here is getting to there from here. I'm interested in a reawakening of primal consciousness that has been repressed by civilized domestication in order to justify and continue conquest and exploitation. We are constantly up against questions of how can we use these things that shape the civilized reality in order to destroy it. Towards this I can only point to what I think is problematic, in this case being any kind of complete faith

in sciences like anthropology and using what speaks to my being without disregarding what I just don't care for.

The point in extending on this discussion is to find a way of using these kinds of findings without using the system that has produced them. I feel that a revolt against civilization will require a revolt against the scientism of civilization (Reason). What Theresa has laid out here is a view from inside the field about what is going on. I don't agree entirely with her view, but I can respect her attempts to overturn from within without preoccupation or delusions of anthropology as the 'wonderscience' (as Lévi-Strauss surely would see it). The path to anarchy will require calling into question all of the 'sacred cows' that have laid the path for rational dissent so that we can return to our primal being.

And the Spectacle Goes On

from *Species Traitor* #2

Beneath the cries for 'justice' and 'sorrow' for loved ones that we never even knew existed, the vast field of emptiness which brings us half-heartedly into the techno-virtual remnants of 'e-communities'; herein lies the drive, the need, the feeling of being a part of something bigger than ourselves.

The truth is that I, and most likely, most, Americans felt little sorrow for those whose lives were taken in the 'tragedy' of September 11, 2001. The shocking horror of reality: the revulsion of admitting to the sin of being incapable of living in the globalized, techno-industrialized State.

The mass, intentional killing of any being (even stripped of conspired, marketable sentiments) is enough to wretch the drowning ruins of a soul. The images of humans falling to their deaths from the pyramids they have lived, and now, died to build and maintain; the scattered bits of bodies being pulled up from the wreckage; the 'heroes' who have tried to hold together the reality they have worked so hard to keep afloat; anger, fear, lust, benevolence, greed, revenge, offense, defense, offense; positives and negatives flowing together in a stream of consciousness that only a 6 digit salary dreamer could mend. All of this wrapped up in a neat little package, for you and I to take as you may. Nothing stated, but everything suggested: there are no accidents in the Spectacle.

We shrink in disgust, overcome by feelings of nausea. First the initial reaction: the instinctual reaction, then by an uncertainty: chaos. In this brief instant, everything and anything is possible, nothing is there to grasp onto and yet we instinctually grasp onto each other: the dead finding life in death. It is freefall: you know for sure the place that you were just in, but the anxiety of not knowing where you will be in the next moment floods over in a field of ecstasy.

We see them, images of THEM, the most precious moment of THEIR lives paraded before our eyes: even death is mediated. The shocking look on the eyes of those around them, moisten over. This intermixed with the professionals mocking the instinctual response. Them, they, us, we...WE the people, WE the citizens, WE the public, WE the innocent, the brutalizers, the victims, the instigators, the recipients, the viewers: THE AUDIENCE.

Every second of an isolated incident, laid out before US, over and over again. A real life adventure: a tragedy, laid out to unfold itself. There are scriptors, but they go unseen. We are the unknowing, yet willing, actors. WE respond to the cues, WE go through the motions; we strive for a comfort zone, a place to be...we pause for station identification.

We exist here and now: that is us; YOU and I, autonomous individuals. There is a time and place for us and that is what is going on while we exist in the Spectacle: that is then, behind, in front, above, below, next to; US and WE, historical beings with an agenda, a plan, a path. You and I are mortals, tangible beings; we are capable of being anything within our physical and mental binds. You and I possess the ability to transcend are legacies, WE exist, but not quite: WE are capable of fulfilling our positions within the larger mechanism. WE and US are the sands of time: come as

fast as we go, only to be buried below the overbearing importance of the Future. US and WE are immortal in our own eyes, OUR eyes of history, progress. WE have big plans, WE have manifest destiny.

You and I don't exceed our boundaries: when there is only now, thrones just lose their importance. Happiness is tangible, it is within reach, it is here, not there. You and I may play, we may fight, we may love, we may, we can, we can forgive and forget: we are. We can build upon common wants and desires, enhance happiness now, and liberty, we could care less about the pursuit of something inherent to our being.

US and WE make boundaries, and WE exist to move them further into the unknown; to conquer, to claim, to raise flags, to build. Happiness exists in the pursuit, IT is out there, we don't know what it is, but we will THEN. WE can't, WE may not, WE are regulated. WE and US are workers, builders, past, time capsules, our own martyrs: US and WE are sacrifices. WE are the collective consciousness, WE are CULTURE, WE are EMPIRE, WE will be known; US and WE are nation-states. WE do as WE must to ensure fluidity and constant progress. WE forget nothing, WE forgive nothing, WE give nothing. Respect is earned, and worth is rewarded by the memories and functions left behind. WE build statues, a little bit of US in each of THEM. WE are civilization, WE are the Spectacle.

The Spectacle is the lot of US and WE; it is our teacher and our mirror. The mirror is finely tuned by THE teachers, who teach that the only thing more important than the legacy we see, is the ensuring that that legacy is carried on, full force, into the future. WE look ahead, WE spoke when spoken to, WE treat with civilized curiosity. WE are noble, as our teachers have defined and exemplified. WE have display cases, OUR museums, to show what WE have come from, how WE have bettered ourselves: WHAT WE ARE NOT.

The Spectacle requires constant reinforcement, positive and negative we are told. The fruits of EMPIRE may cause corruption, if not properly mediated and handled. WE are noble, WE and US are GODS. The Spectacle is our direction, our aim; it is US and WE, our punishment and our reward.

WE and Us bow and pray to the Spectacle. WE know our roles and realize that hard work and prosperity in the Spectacle is good. Good is a retainer for the coming happiness, the Future. WE are inferior, unless otherwise specified. Training and good breeding are upstanding. The Spectacle produces many great things; take joy in them, but never forget about the Big Plans: this is what WE are told; this is what we are taught.

WE and US know that teaching is best left to Experts. Over the years we accumulate more knowledge of the Spectacle: the benefit of walking the railroad of Progress. Experts are chosen in every field of Possibility. Mediation is more of protection than anything, "it's in your best interests". The Spectacle realizes the vulnerability of the human: the reoccurrence of our animal nature. IT recognizes that we must not be animals anymore, WE must tame our instincts: WE call it Reason. In times of war, the revenge of legacy, the inability to move on, the distancing of YOU and I, Experts become all the more necessary. IT is only a test, in case of any actual emergency, further directions will follow. WE have Order; WE have Control, WE HAVE...

WE are beyond chaos, WE are Civilized, WE are better, we are WE, and WE must Win.

YOU and I are horrified, we are scared. We don't know how to react. We cling, we pack up, we gather, we seek comfort. We follow our instincts, we trust each other. We, YOU and I, don't understand, we don't understand any of it. Things don't seem so clear, we begin to wonder, we begin to worry about Tomorrow, we begin to question the sanctity of the Future. The actions of

YOU and I are understandable, that is what makes them predictable. Predictability is a Science, that is a tenet of the Spectacle: a game of Teachers. Predictions are made based on Empirical Evidence, simulations are done in controlled environments: this is only a test.

The tests go on constantly, to weed out unnecessary elements: the Science of eliminating the bad seeds. Situations like this are prepared for and all possibilities are accounted for. As doped up on over- and under-the counter drugs, on the screen drugs, 9-5 drugs, the cash drug, the Simulated experience, the role playing: our instincts pop up a little bit. Chaos stands out on the Spectacles' radars, and IT goes into overdrive. IT reacts by asserting Control, by grabbing out, by reformulating, redefining, and reasserting CONTROL. WE succumb to what WE have 'always' known.

IT is only a test. YOU and I resort to the instincts we have been taught to ignore. US and WE aren't as important for that brief period, and it is apparent everywhere. The Spectacle dissolves YOU and I back into IT. IT emphasizes new words; US, WE, PROTECT, REVENGE, this is our HERITAGE, OUR, WE, US, AMERICA: One Nation, Under GOD, indivisible...

The new lesson is being subtly implanted. WE, glued to the electronic Teachers; the computers, the televisions, the machinery, sit idly by and watch. We see it over and over again, a perpetual loop of death and destruction. We watch the bodies fall, we watch the bodies crush, we see the abrupt end of lives only half lived: being a society of Dreamers. We see this, and we see THEM. They are not the conventional Teachers, but THEY serve the same purpose. The talking heads of the studios give US the example of how to react, how to feel, how to see the situation: over and over and over again. This is what WE will see; this is what WE will remember. They professionally produced emotions and the civilized interpretation of Death. The mediation of mediation. The words between the lines read: WE are still here, and WE have not abandoned YOU, seek solace in OUR 'arms'. Let this be OUR fight. This is what WE are raised to know, this is how WE react.

The sad truth is that it happens everyday. The only test here was that it backfired, if it can even be called that. The whole scenario is a reaffirmation, a stimulation, a tightening of the leash. WE bow to the mythical, immortal STATE, the Spectacle. We swallow IT up whole, WE shed tears, no longer of instinct and care and questioning, but of Fury and Hate: WE seek REVENGE. The circle is complete.

The continuation of the Spectacle, the laying of LEGACY, the path of Progress, requires this Control: this level of faith and servitude. The 'necessary evils' are more ingrained in OUR being, WE and US, the Spectacle, WE are on a mission. There is no YOU and I here, only US and THEM. WE are not free beings brought together, but legacies, and entities in constant conflict: one Winner takes all. The greatest award for conquering is that the Winner Controls the merged PAST.

It happens everyday, but it happens THERE. IT never happens to US, but examples must be made. WE and US must show with vigor that WE are something, a force to be reckoned with. The truth is You and I would never let this happen, but the reality is US and WE: EMPIRE, WE do this. IT makes US, IT defines US, IT lets us be US. It is was we are tuned to see in our mirror, our museums, OUR past, OUR, OUR, OUR...

YOU and I would have never known IT happened. YOU and I would not pillage the planet and destroy the greater community of free beings: autonomous life, to find something that exists in everything, everything but US and WE, the Spectacle: CIVILIZATION. YOU and I would not create a global economy, we would not build towers, statues, monuments, his-story: YOU and I are content with existing. We are the soul of life, the source of happiness, joy, the reason for

living; and we don't have to send machines across the universe to discover that. YOU and I are alive, WE and US are dead, pages to a wilting EMPIRE that will have only itself to ever see its' throne. IT will rot, IT won't last forever, IT will only ever be IT. IT is a prison that we build and maintain. IT rewards by selling back broken pieces of YOU and I, the free beings IT seeks to destroy, to break, to tame.

YOU and I still exist, under the guise of US and WE. IN the ruin of Progress, we find each other, the YOU and I, find each other. You and I are capable, we can end US and WE, we can end EMPIRE: CIVILIZATION, we can do it, together and on our own, can, will, may...

The Spectacle can be turned off, freedom still exists for YOU and I, for us: all the YOU and I's of the world. It is that which will know joy, which will know life. The Spectacle only knows THEN, YOU and I can find NOW.

Theses on the Fall of Civilization *or* How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace the Coming Collapse

from Species Traitor #2

“Civilization, synonym of Capital, Technology and the Modern World, called Leviathan by Hobbes and Western Spirit by Turner, is as racked by decomposition as any earlier Leviathan. But Civilization is not one Leviathan among many. It is The One. Its final decomposition is Leviathan’s end. After twenty centuries of stony sleep vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, the sleeper is about to wake to the cadences of a long-forgotten music or to the eternal silence of death without a morrow.”

— Fredy Perlman, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*

Revolutionary theory, aimed at dismantling either the State or the whole of civilization, is plagued by authoritative delusions. The worst and best case scenarios are played out as absolute truths, while it seems obvious that we can’t predict the future, only influence it. I hold to the notion that civilization will inevitably fall, although, I can’t say when or how, or even for sure. The two possibilities for this seem to be either external or internal based, although each is a huge range of potential scenarios. I can’t pretend to know more than a fraction, and while it can be an interesting mind game, it may never be more than that.

To me, it seems the most commonly held perceptions towards this notion are based off; a catastrophic excess spawning disaster (ecological or, possibly, technological), a conscious revolt or refusal, or a semi-conscious ‘final shove’ (enacted by a percentage of the population).

The possibility of collapse from ecological excess is quite compelling. It becomes hard to envision anything short of catastrophe stopping the civilized disaster. In some cases, the best we can do is prepare for this (although the practice should be done regularly). We could dwell on the ways this may play out, or even project, based on previous occurrences, but that alone offers little to the extended Society. Even if it seems pointless or exhausted, or the State may kill itself off, a desire to live free of civilization should enact response. We have no obligations, but it seems to make sense that regardless of outcomes, we should always resist, and at least try to be a cog in the mega-machine.

It seems that optimism in the fall of civilization is increasingly rare as the State extends its bounds to give the illusion of more control and more coercive power. It is true, and should never be overlooked, that the State is very powerful. We are not facing an easy enemy, or despite misconceptions, one that would flutter away with the ease of a thought (which seems to be a crucial starting point, but no ends in itself). We are facing a very brutal and coercive warring State, one that has shown that it does not take to opposition lightly. This is the reality of our

current context. There should be no candy coating of the fact that we are, and have always been, in a constant clash with 'the powers that be'. This is a war, not one we are waging, but one in which we refuse to be defeated, where we refuse to be slaves, and our lives are at stake.

This is civilization against everything else on the planet. Such things as class war, race war, civil war, and so on are merely functions within it, little blurbs to keep attention away from the real source of all oppression. This isn't to say these things don't exist, it doesn't take much to see the effects of the class and race war within westernized societies, but to 'wage' these are to fight on false fronts: futile battles of the defeated. The fact that thousands of poor, college educated, and middle class workerists are urging the need for a 'class war' is ignoring the fact that the ruling class has already declared and won that war from their inception. Exploitation of workers is very real, but will never gain ground beyond the enemies' lines as the systems of work, production and other civilized vices continue.

The reality of this war, and especially methods of attack are not going to be the center of discussion in this essay (while some points make arise). These are things that are not set in stone and continually flow to meet the needs of those who seek to overcome the institutions of power that enslaves them. However, I will speak of the reasoning behind my optimism towards the fall of civilization.

Despite what the warring State will propagandize, it seeks to extend its military and coercive powers, not because it is furthering its 'absolute control', but because it recognizes its futility. It seems that our current State so boldly wears the armor of 'its history' so that it may grant the illusion that because 'WE' (the imaginary collective) have gotten to this stage of Progress, 'WE' posses the ability to reinforce that progression. The current State would like us to believe that it is what has brought it here, that it doesn't wear another State's armor, but that its armor is its own, and it has produced it. This simply isn't the case, and this only gives more potential strength to the outcome of a "final shove".

As with the domesticated within societies which initially moved away from a self-sufficient mode of gathering and hunting what existed, into a State dependent on its own products: those in 'power' also lost the ability to become self sufficient. Whereas previous stages were 'more able' to go back to previous lifestyles, those who followed would become further alienated from that previous way of life, as they were reared completely in a different mode of substance, and would be more concerned with progressing their technique than holding onto increasingly 'useless' knowledge of past 'ways'. To put it simply, the State has been moving on and isn't looking back. To the continuation of power, this means more devotion to improving the functioning of the State. This naturally carries the assumption that things will go as 'planned' (or as the religious would say, 'pre-determined').

It should go without saying, that societies of smaller scale and relatively more easily obtained technology, were more able to pick up and more on, or basically, rebuild their society. This is where our State comes into play. We are constantly at a higher point of 'progression' and thus alienation; this is the weak spot of the current condition. Our ability to produce at a level necessary to maintain our power structure has become reliant upon our technological, globalized infrastructure. Our over infatuation with the reliance on technology to help build a coming utopia, has left us more in its hands than our own. The State is reliant upon that very technological infrastructure to perform its most basic functions. This can be most easily seen in the role technological 'advancement' has had in globalizing the State. It is molded to its current condition and business as usual.

If something were to impair that infrastructure to function (such was the prospect with the millennium bug, a sign that a slight miscalculation could potentially halt the mega-machine), our civilization no longer possesses the ability and tolerance to rebuild itself. This is the result of technological advancement and reliance, especially in the realm of a 'global economy.' This is the reason why it is more important than ever for the State to maintain the illusion of absolute control, and also my basis for optimism that a severe blow to the current infrastructure could be the final one to civilization. If its very basis was to be shaken, we don't possess the ability to rebuild it in a timely enough manner to keep up the façade of functioning.

I don't doubt for a minute that a great many domesticates will hold dearly to the death trip civilization is. When civilization does fall there can be telling what may happen. There could be a 'Mad Max'-esque period, or may not happen, I don't really know. I feel many may try to sustain themselves off the remnants of civilized living (i.e., canned foods, etc.), there may even be an attempt to maintain current power structures based on unstable food supplies. In such a case, it seems power structures would exist as long as the supplies.

After the fall, I don't doubt that there will be those who refuse to accept the fate of their excessive lifestyles. In many cases, there are few options aside from accepting and moving on. For them, such aspects as mutual aid and permaculture become vital. It seems to take little imagination to see the 'karma-tic' fate the power mongers hold. Some may try to sustain their 'way of death' via alternate power sources, but what will that be compared to how things are now, and it's questionable if there are even any that can hold up on their own. I'm more optimistic that things will find a balance in time and I refuse any bouts of 'callousness' that might be granted towards the possibilities that I see. I have no authoritarian vision (or desire for one) for ways of 'redistributing the wealth' or some other leftist pipe dream. I see the fall of civilization to be inevitable, and thus, work to both brace for collapse and push for it, and for doing so I have no apologies.

What is the Totality?

It is the high residues of hazardous and potentially lethal chemicals inside your fat cells. It is you sitting inside and turning on the television or computer on a beautiful day. It is you shopping when you are depressed. It is the feeling you get that something is missing. It is your worries that a fire may destroy all of your possessions and your plans to try and take them with you. It is the thought that tells you to go on a diet. It is the excess fat on your body. It is the headache that won't go away. It is the bleeding in your intestines from years of pain alleviating drug use. It is the birth defects of your children. It is your killer when you die from a car accident. It is your savior when it attempts to fill your void for you. It is your carpal tunnel syndrome. It is your tumor. It is your expensive coffin and burial clothing. It is the drugs you take when you need an escape. It is the bulldozer that destroyed the woods you might have known so well. It is the towering skyscraper that makes you feel forever tiny and powerless. It is your boss. It is minimum wage, it is maximum wage.

It is your prison, sometimes with bars, sometimes without. It is all your fears. It is what is keeping you up at night. It is the lock on your door. It is the bullet in your gun. It is your noose and your tie. It is that thing that you don't want to do, but you feel that you have to. It is the turned cheek. It is the cold shoulder. It is the ad that tells you the internet will provide affection for you. It is the new appliance that you never knew existed, but you can't live without. It is poverty. It is inequality. It is the sink or swim economy. It is the thing that has categorized you. It has stopped you from doing the things you want. It is what makes you jealous. It is your hate. It is your love. It is your purgatives that you feel might be somewhat strange. It is your clenched fist. It is your mace spray. It is the police. It is the nightstick. It is the protestor and the media which tells you not to listen to them. It is the corporation which creates a new truth for you daily, one which provides you with the knowledge to buy what they make with confidence. It is the gold star you earned in kindergarten. It is the A you got in high school. It is your college degree. It is your paycheck. It is your therapist. It is your bill from the medicine you bought to "fix your brain".

It is the ache in your back. It is your swollen knees. It is your worsening eyesight from the incandescent glow of our institutions. It is your hearing loss. It is the "white noise" that drives you crazy. It is your adrenaline. It is the tears that pour down your face after a sad movie. It is your longing for a dramatic romance with a happy ending. It is your lust for sex. It is the objectified woman, and the powerless man. It is the rapist. It is the murderer. It is the thief. It is the profiteer. It is the worker. It is the dead union organizer.

It is the soldier that is willing to kill and die for cheaper oil. It is the victims of a government enflamed over unwillingness to follow their way of life. It is the activist hung for saying they don't want to be killed for profits. It is the rubber bullet. It is pepper spray. It is the extinct species. It is the dying world. It is polluted air. It is tainted water. It is the accident at the nuclear power plant. It is the oil spill. It is the break in the pipeline. It is the brakes that failed. It is the dwindling biodiversity. It is the patented seed. It is the farmer killing her/himself with the pesticides that

were going to make life better. It is the seat belt that mangled you, but didn't kill you entirely. It is the blood dripping from the cut you got at work, but can't afford to let it heal. It is the concrete beneath your feet. It is the stairs you fall down. It is the train that went off the tracks. It is the plane that blew up. It is the boat that sank. It is the drink you take to just forget it all. It is your misery. It is your world.

It is everything to you. It is civilized existence and the mindset which maintains it.

It is what makes devastation seem not so shocking. It takes you through the day. It dulls you out at night. It gives you nightmares, it gives you dreams. It is your feeling of not having of not having accomplished enough. It is your desire to have a child to complete yourself. It is the physical and mental barriers of civilized life. It is civilization and it has become you. It is a mindset. It is power. It is physically reinforced to block off the reality of its powerlessness by mediating human existence from the natural world. It is the feeling of superiority, which supplies the reason to destroy all else. It is unnatural. It will fall, but will you fall with it? It is personal and it is individual. It is defeatable and its defeat is needed for our liberation, as well as for that of all else that human kind has set out to conquer and overpower. Freedom is only a thought away. Liberate the mind and the body will follow.

It's Time to Disorganize!

from *Species Traitor*

If there's anything that the failures of the left, particularly the unions (from the UAW, AFL-CIO, to the IWW), it's that any 'revolutionary' theory that doesn't question the key elements of civilization is going to do nothing more than shift the social order to a slightly 'modified' version. That is if they work at all. We can no longer look to any kind of reform for an end to the death machine that is civilization. It has long been an embedded idea in 'revolutionary' strands that success requires organization. The age-old calls of the Wobblies, "It's time to organize!" are ringing hollow as the leftist milieu grinds them into the pages of dead social movements in radical history. What has our past of 'organization' brought us? We can say that it has brought us some success because those at the top of the newly created social hierarchies tell us we have. Organization pushes us back into the same top-down hierarchies that we are trying to revolt against and erase. What will this bring us? Goodbye old boss, hello to the new, any difference? Maybe there'll be a mild greening (or Redding more likely), but it's still the same social order, which generally is unquestioning of destructive civilized lifestyles. But even in the short run they offer little more than pushing forward new leaders to tell us how and when to act out and how and when we've won. It's getting us nowhere. Little, lefty reformist games comprised of a lot of talk and no action. 'Consensus' meetings held behind closed doors by chosen or predetermined delegates will layout the guidelines of how much reform the masses will stand behind. We have no choice in the matter and don't realize the two-faced realities of those disposing of empty rhetoric. It has not and will not get us anywhere.

If we do truly desire an end to the civilized social order, we can only do so by enacting insurgence and revolt by means that keep no aspect of the current social order, or push for a system that mirrors this. The only hope we have is for spontaneous acts of revolt to come from the passions and rage of individuals. No top down orders or 'plans for action' can wake the insurgent drowned out by the totality of civilized thought.

The only true and successful revolution will not be brought about by predetermined games of give, give, borrow, silent marches and banners, and especially new hierarchies. It will come from the hearts of those who bear the blows of civilization (which is all of us, including non-humans). Those whose dreams are shattered, those who will never live autonomously, unrestrained from the totality of the civilized concrete cages we are born into. Those who have been shut off at birth from their birthright to flourish as individuals and a community, and from the community of Nature that would offer them more love than we can conceive in our current downtrodden state. The failures of all hierarchies are becoming clearer daily. The constant collapse of the social order from its overbearing weight will draw more to find their catalyzing points, and thus to their own revolts. Insurgence is rising, and civilization is falling. Give it the final shove by using your own words and actions. Breaking the spell of civilized order is the only way to finish off Leviathan, and everyday is bringing us closer.

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Kevin Tucker
Essays from Species Traitor

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Spectacle of the Symbolic

Kevin Tucker

Contents

The creation of power	3
The repression of being and wildness	4
Mediation and symbolic life	5
Possession	6
The beginning of 'things'	6
Turning myth into stone	7
The symbols spectacularized	7
The worker and the consumer	9
The revolt against mediation	9

Life is an interconnected web of beings. This is existence, this is life. Without that web we are all nothing. Take a look around your Reality and try to find what is necessary to your existence, what will you die without? This isn't like playing the game of our Culture, the Culture of Commodification, where we ask what we would die for, what would we kill for (overlooking all the things we are killing for). Instead, this question is an honest search for what we need in life.

The focus here will be on the way symbolic culture, the mentality of civilization, has invaded our consciousness. The kind of power relations needed for governments to exist rests on our recognition of that power. While not believing in their power won't make civilization just go away, the realization that life exists beyond the survival that we've had to deal with. Recognizing our own potential is one step in reclaiming our lives.

The creation of power

Before we begin talking of civilization, we must understand what we are talking about. Civilization moves off power yet no where on Earth does power truly exist. Power is not a thing, but a relation of domination and ownership, an idea. Power is the product of property, be it place, person or what have you. In a world of limited wants and unlimited means, ownership (which can not exist without property) is useless. The world of the forager must be one that can follow the migrations of herds or adapt to the seasonal availability of plants, insects, and any other flora that makes up the majority of the diet and such a world has no place for 'possessions'.

A nomad is limited by what they can move with, although this is hardly a limitation. The creation of 'property' is the product of being sedentary or staying places for longer periods of time. The more attached you are to a particular area the more able you are to keep things you would normally have to move with regularly. What we have learned from anthropology and the failures of domestication is that our way of survival is very recent. We have seen qualitative differences between the spiritual wealth of foragers, which anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has called the "original affluent society", and the poverty of our materialistic 'wealth' addictions.

As anarchists, the most important difference here refers to autonomy. Power is the result of institutionalized specialization. Foragers recognize those who tend to excel in one particular area of life, a role which we commonly misperceive as 'leaders'. However, as anthropologist Pierre Clastres points out in his book *Societies Against the State*, foraging societies are not just stateless (as if the state just hasn't happened yet), but "societies against the state", meaning they had no will to give up their autonomy or recognize that any particular person should control the lives of others. So in 'primitive' societies across the world, you see social taboos that keep any individual from acquiring power.

This has been recognized in foragers like the !Kung of the Kalahari who will insult or chop down the hunter/s who brings in a lot of meat. To an outsider this would be considered deeply offensive, but the point is to keep the people all at one level so no individual can have a big ego. Customs like this are nearly universal, and they signify the conscious recognition that power over others doesn't benefit the rest of the peoples.

What has been further studied by Clastres and others is that while certain individuals are acknowledged as being particularly good at certain activities, there is no institutionalization of their role. Although they are recognized as more able or useful during certain periods (i.e., hunts,

battles, or medicine), that role dies with them. When a particularly good hunter passes on, there are no elections to 'fill that slot', because no real 'slot' ever existed.

What this signifies is the kind of flexibility that foraging existence allows. It is recognized that there is typically a sexual division of labor in 'primitive' societies, but again the people are autonomous in the sense that positions are not institutionalized, meaning there is no systemic ruling that men will do this or women do that (foragers don't apply sexist standards or values). In every sense of the word, these peoples live in anarchy, a life devoid of power relations and offering full autonomy.

These kinds of specifics are not the focus here because they are rather well covered elsewhere and I can't recommend enough that people seek this knowledge out. What is important here is an understanding that life exists beyond the sacrificial order of civilization, and that things such as 'power' can only be maintained so long as their role is upheld. A revolt against the power/civilized mentality is a big step towards taking down this beast.

The repression of being and wildness

Humans have spent over 99.9% of our existence on this planet as foragers. Our food was scavenged, gathered or hunted. To exist this way means that you must be an active member in the larger community of life: the world around and of you, the state of wildness. If you cannot be a part of this, then there will be nothing to sustain and support you: when an animal is separated from their wildness, they become separated from life. It's even simpler than this really, if you do not understand, respect and place yourself in the world around you, you lose a place in that reality, and because of this you can't take and give as one would to survive. Our groundlessness and depression only feeds this reality.

The forager has nothing more than a completely intimate relationship with their extended selves: the world around them. Civilized understandings must misrepresent this so that it can continue to exist and devour. To know the layers of growth and life in the world is more than just a question of survival, but knowledge of the self, since it gives placement and the knowledge of being within. The forager never destroys this; it serves no purpose to exploit something that is a part of you.

The Civilized being has devastated one of the most intimate aspects of life: eating and fulfilling the needs of our bodies. When we are getting food, we are buying pieces of our own death, wrapped in cellophane, priced by the pound and canned. We have pieces of paper that represent pieces of our lives sold off to someone who gets more use out of us as machines than as beings. We exchange these two things as objects and the whole process is burnt into our minds.

You see our separation: pieces of wildness, long since tamed and beaten into the right packages, shined up and ready to be sold off. Each bit is a replica of the shining, glorious product of years of mixing and matching, of buffing and waxing the gene pool: throwing away millions of years of adaptation and existence, taking and giving for whatever immediate need there seems to be. It's all there before our eyes and through our bodies, as seen on the charts or on the TV or in the textbooks. These bits of our giant, decaying corpse are taken in, they are symbols of parts of life, which has long since been chopped up and served to us.

The food becomes a symbol for Nourishment; you have to eat according to the planned pyramid scheme in order to stay afloat: which is represented by the notion of Health. And it's all a

delusion, what we're eating is isolated death: warped shadows of our wild selves, sprayed, infested, exploiting, shipped and handled, all removed from anything living and sustaining. What we eat is no longer to be taken in and let out, in order to continue the cycle of life. It is plastic, and it only sustains an image, a giant Symbol, to be devoured, wrenched dry by the suffocating innards to be thrown out and flushed off into the nothingness that will only haunt the world as a symbol of the most destructive epidemic to face this planet.

Mediation and symbolic life

Inherent to the poverty of this way of survival is something so simple that it can be frightening. All the drudgery and disgust of everyday 'life' comes from the separation of ourselves from the rest of the world. This isn't some quick solution or easy answer, but the reality of our situation. What is making the distinction between us and everything else is what we call symbolic culture.

So it seems right now might be the perfect time to kick it down a step, take things back, especially when the words 'symbolic thought' or 'symbolic culture' alone are enough to bore someone either back to sleep or just get some kind of disinterest in an intangible idea, but what is going to be shown here is that this isn't anything like that. The effects of symbolic culture come through in every aspect of daily life and its side effects. So what the hell is all this anyways then? The best way to look at it is back.

Human beings are animals, that is, you and I and every single person is an animal. No matter how much we try and act like we aren't, and especially when we kill off most of the planet to try and prove otherwise, we are and always will be animals. The driving force behind this supposed 'Progress' and actual Destruction comes from an ideology that has been about 10,000 years in the making: symbolic culture.

As John Zerzan points out in 'Running on Emptiness', symbolic culture is the outcome of excessive symbolization. It occurs when the senses have been domesticated into a "symbolic cultural atmosphere". What symbolic culture is then is an institutionalization of symbols, removing them from the direct senses into a single vision that becomes a basis for the group/tribe/clan/empire. This is the dawn of Civilization.

Everything that we have come to accept as Reality and base our perceptions on spreads off of the base of sedentary, intensive agriculture: the great settling which gave rise to power. This isn't to say that the first seed planted was some kind of fall from heaven. Humans have been taking an active part in their surroundings for the millions of years that we (and our predecessors) have existed. Growing food was no new idea and living mainly this was hardly novel. What separates this (horticulture) from sedentary agriculture (and thus Civilization) is the point at which settlement becomes permanence.

This idea has much more behind it than one might think it could. The difference between an Agricultural society and others who would grow even large percentages of their own food is a mentality: a basic sentiment of detachment. Maybe we should look back further.

Possession

“Some of the people who left the human communities remembered some of the qualities. They remembered some of the joys of possession—not possession of things but possession of Being.”

—Fredy Perlman. *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*

Those who have shaped our Reality (from the shaman on to the priest, politician, scientist, and so on) would have us believe that what is essential to life are ‘Things,’ bits and pieces of a shattered world replaced by objects that can be bought, sold, inherited or auctioned. Understanding this only takes our search further back, but what is it that we (as individuals) associate with? We see objects that reflect an imaginary ‘collective consciousness’ (the ‘collective consciousness’ as individuals associating their own abilities and actions with that of some kind of ‘collective’ with others they share some traits with, think nation, race, culture, and so on), that is all the of us determined consumers as individual versions of civilization, all of us as proto-cyborgs (we are physically alive, but lack all qualities of ‘life’, and our interests are technologically driven): multi-functioning parts of the giant Mega-Machine.

We might respond to such comments as absurd, surely there are people in our lives that we value over things! Yet we lack the ability to separate our relations with others any more than treating them as ‘things’. Our relationships are weighable by capitalist standards of what we can ‘gain’ or may ‘lose’ from each situation. We have those that we are ‘close’ to (perhaps we fall under the same ‘personality’ type or have a capitalist valuable relationship) and then there are those who just, consequently, fall on the other side of the scale, just underneath those shoes or cars we ‘had to have.’

The beginning of ‘things’

“People do not exploit a nature that speaks to them. But a nature that, as two famous nineteenth-century ethnocentrics expressed it, ‘faced humans initially as an entirely foreign, all-powerful and unassailable might, towards which they behaved as animals, and which they allowed to lord it over them as if they were brutes’; such a nature has no language of its own any more, it is merely matter.

“...people do not exploit those they understand. But when out among strangers, there is a tendency towards barricading oneself in ones ‘subjectivity’ much more even than at home, and what is strange is alienated by blocked the avenues of trust.”

—Hans Peter Duerr, *Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary between Wilderness and Civilization*

It could be said that power was the origin of symbolic culture. The ability to subject others is necessary to begin a system of pure domination. The symbolic mediation of language was still capable of keeping some attachment to the world. The language of foragers is tied to that time and space. With civilization, there is conquest and colonization, as uprooted people begin spreading. In order to grow, it is required that you have standardization. Languages became universal and

the detachment completed, their use was removed from direct experience to the realm of power relations.

It is important to understand that you can't just live within a hierarchy, it must be internalized and the individuals must think, breathe and speak it. This is the role of symbolic culture, to internalize the will of the powerful. The world that we are a part of has, since agriculture, become a thing. Our lives are removed from the chaos of life in search of artificial order.

Turning myth into stone

"[Writing] initiated what print and computers only continue, the reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist."

-Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*

What Zerzan does in his essay 'Running on Emptiness' is point to the progression of symbolic thought as it not only mediates, but replaces life. We are seeing the split of the wild and the tamed. The split becomes more defined over time and the world we are of becomes another object to fully subjugate. We unleash Reason upon the world, a system of justification for our exploitation. Reason acts against its opposite 'instinct', as it tries to move humans out of being animals (although it begins at first along the lines of culture, race and sex).

The language of Reason is a pure symbolization. As we know it now, it is the product of the 'enlightenment' and comes from literacy. In his book, *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong boasts of the joys of literacy while doing us the service of charting its disruption to human consciousness. Civilized oral (without writing) cultures were capable of creating destructive ideologies, but writing perfected the process (see 'Writing our Fate'). The deed essentially perfects systems of barter, but also begins to remove itself fully from the present.

Myth serves as memory for oral peoples. The myths could shape reality and be shaped by events, positively or negatively. With writing, those myths would be cut off from the fluidity of life. People become fixed to what is 'written in stone'. The great religious texts serve as witness to this. The myths of the Old Testament are co-opted from pagan cultures and others who recognized a fall from bliss but wouldn't turn back. It seems that the power of the great monotheistic religions had to exploit the world with such vigor came from the written 'word of God' which was frozen in time.

Writing perfects Reason as it extends justification away from the 'real world' to the world of ideas. Our current epidemic needs no other justification than the written decree of the 'experts'. In this way, we can disregard our exploitation of the Earth because it has been written otherwise. We keep our face in books and media as life is being killed right before us. Symbolic culture is essentially what allows us to turn our cheek as our lives have become fully mediated.

The symbols spectacularized

The processes of Science and Reason rationalize and suppress the chaos of life. We categorize, therefore we are not: the foundation has been laid to divide and conquer our world. Our world has become symbolic and we are free to manipulate at our will. Without this alteration of perception,

we could have never done what we (the culture of cities: Civilization, not individuals, or our 'species') have. Modern life is symbolic culture spectacularized. Through our mega-technology we've succeeded in creating a candy-coated mediation.

Situationist Guy Debord noted the problem of symbolic culture in his book *The Society of the Spectacle*: "All that once was directly lived has become mere representation." Our world has been reduced, quantified and qualified to the point where we are all just spectators to "an immense accumulation of spectacles."

Our religious/scientific rationality becomes tangible through the media. Social critic Susan Sontag made the effects of visual media the focus of her book *On Photography*. She recognized the issue of tangibility:

"Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still. Or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote. One can't possess reality, one can possess (and be possessed by) images..."

What Sontag is pointing to is this process of reification, basically the process of turning reality into symbols, things.

At this point, aided by print and audio-visual recordings, symbolic culture has become autonomous. While in the past symbolic culture existed to mediate human relations to all life, it was still stuck in that moment (although looking forward). With these new recording technologies, the past becomes as real as the present. Time and space become unimportant/indecipherable, and we are constantly reproducing a reality.

Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse Five*, comes to mind as we exist in timelessness like his main character. With a recorded memory we are able to put ourselves back into any time or situation recorded. We live in virtual reality as this constant surreal world becomes our obsession. The civilized seeks to absorb all experience so we flock to movies, television, theme parks, malls (shopping for new identities), and the internet. People pour into 'new and bigger' possessions seeking new pain killers and distractions searching for that pure experience. With our minds turned towards the virtual reality, we only become absorbed and forget to look outside the box-world for life.

What this 'autonomous spectacle' means is that it continues for its own reasons. Our reality is becoming more and more groundless as our level of technology soars past the amount of authentic experience. Civilization seeks perfection for the sake of perfection. Suppose full automation and simulation was possible, we have to ask ourselves if this is what is desirable. We must ask, what does it mean to be human?

In his book *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* Fredy Perlman recognized how spectacularized, mega-technological civilization is essentially devouring the entire world as it searches for more. The deprivation is all around us:

"From the day when battery-run voices began broadcasting old speeches to battery-run listeners, the beast has been talking to itself. Having swallowed everyone and everything outside itself, the beast becomes its own sole frame of reference. It entertains itself, exploits itself and wars on itself. It has reached the end of its progress, for there is nothing left for it to progress against except itself."

The spectacle of symbolic culture has essentially become a 'reality' TV show rerun. All is predictable and equitable as the media produce and sell reality. We are consuming ourselves and

our situation is sounding like F.C. described it in 'Industrial Society and its Future', that we are only being formed into the technological system. I stand by that conclusion that: "It would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences."

The worker and the consumer

Our current values are predetermined by Capitalist notions of what is important and what it means to be a person. The Consumer takes their value by their freedom to choose buying habits, and maintaining a prescribed level of self determination, taking pride in the product availability that colonization and exploitation have brought them.

The Consumer is the extension of the Worker identity, being pushed further into the Consumer category in this Culture by the importance of a stronger breed of people willing to fill their spiritual void with more and more crap. The Worker is identified by their labor ("what do you do for a living?"), this is what they have brought into existence. We take pride in the fact that every thing we bring into existence makes us just that much more similar to God, but the novelty is quickly wearing.

The role of the Worker has lost it's little bit of shimmer as the Worker ends up being more and more a piece of the Machine itself. Capitalism succeeds in making beings into nothing more than machines. We have become proletarianized, that is we are worth no more what we can 'contribute' to the capitalist economy. Those who have no 'value' or aren't worth being 'added' to the economy are considered obstacles to the 'inevitable' Progress.

For those of us living within civilization this has meant a number of things. The past 'revolutionary' movements have sought to reform the means of production because they had completely internalized their worth as 'proletarians', as workers.

The Industrial Worker has been the extension of the Agricultural Worker, someone who is directly connected to the 'production' of something necessary to life. They are involved full time in alienation from the way things are and will be, the connection is directly severed.

We see that this could go on and on even further into boredom, but there is an initial problem here that keeps us going down the long, dark path of separation and makes us isolated beings in a time of mass overpopulation, crowding and high technology. We've become walking ads for the life that is sold to us at an hourly wage, and yet we can be 'happy' about it while every single one of us requires some kind of drug or escape to make it through each day (even though ways of dropping out are becoming more deadly).

We have moved beyond proletarianization now in the first and second worlds. There is hardly anything left to produce here outside of the spectacle itself. Our purpose here is solely to ensure the 'Progress' of civilization on its path to 'perfection'. This is us, this is now: we are homeless and soulless worldwide. Similar to the science fiction movie the Matrix we are becoming batteries for the machine to carry on for its own sake. Where is the human in this?

The revolt against mediation

So how does this all fit in with everyday life? All of these notions may seem abstract or like a meaningless mind game, but the reality is that these basic ideas shape our entire perception of the world. It is clear that Civilization is more than just some 'thing' out there: a tangible enemy

to be dealt with in physical terms, but an entire system. It has been brought into existence as ideas that have solidified in Symbolic Culture and have become mentalities,

Ideology, an entire way of perceiving your Reality: it has become our Reality itself. The concrete formulations can only have come into existence through the spreading of this warped relation to each other and the world: it has separated us from everything that we are, and this is what we are up against when we talk about ending the death trip that our culture has brought about.

For these reasons, it seems imperative that we address the issue directly and try and find a way to overcome our complete alienation and rediscover our being. Only when this is done can we come together as complete beings and bring ourselves back to a complete world. But this is all part of a great process, the only way to liberate ourselves from our domestication is to understand what it is that is keeping us back, and that digging will only come through revolt against the domesticating force of Civilization, within ourselves and what is being imposed on us. The true revolution begins with the insurrection against the mediation and alienation of our being, and this is a battle to be fought on every front. With this we seek to understand what we are up against.

So I ask again, what does it mean to be human? This is something that can only be lived, not told. The greatest journey of life is to realize your being. The answer comes in the form of experience which shows that there are no answers. What we will find is that our questions are over-looking the real world that lies before our eyes. The original question posed here isn't rhetorical, nor is it a simple question, it is a beginning point and all of us must start there if we hope to ever live fully.

This is only one step in a long path. The institutions of power carry much strength because they have possessed so many. In this late hour, our options are becoming clearer. We can either accept full automation and continue the symbolic life or we can try and find our way to an unmediated reality. The implications of this are to be lived and the revolt against Reason implants the seed of insurrection. Our option is to fight against the system of domestication so that we may arise as full beings. That choice is yours to enact upon.

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Kevin Tucker
Spectacle of the Symbolic

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The Creation of Disaster

Kevin Tucker

Contents

The balance of nature, and our attempts to refuse it.	3
Polluting the Web of Life.	4
The disaster of dependency.	5
The failure of control.	5
The faulty foundations of civilization.	6
Learning lessons from destruction.	7

One can't help but feel remorse for the thousands of victims involved in the massive earthquakes that recently hit India. Despite one's political views, the kind of hardships many have had to endure because of this incident, has granted a good deal of sympathy from those aware of the situation. But what are the lessons being learned? Is the aid sent with the notion that it will help rebuild the areas that have been struck, or will it go to help prevent. Either way, the most likely outcome will be that the tragedy will go down in history books and the dead mourned, but India will rebuild, and business will go on once again. That is till the next earthquake or other 'natural disaster' strikes. This wouldn't be unlikely, as it is how every other major 'disaster' of recent times has been treated. This isn't the first or last incident of this caliber and type to occur, so what do we do? We rebuild and move on, with more effort and passion than before, to help hold up the impossible ideal that we can sustain our way of life. It is becoming more and more necessary that we re-assess this reoccurring situation. The mentality that no matter what cards nature deals us (even if those cards are dealt by global warming or underground testing of nuclear arms or some other 'necessary evil of progress'), we will endure, and each time with more vigor and endurance. Every time a 'disaster' of this type occurs, we treat it as if nature has done us wrong. In many cases, we don't even offer more than sympathy and aid to those who suffered, primarily out of joy that it wasn't us who were forced to endure such hardships. Either way we turn a blind eye to the reality of the issue: that nature acts in cycles that we cannot possibly understand.

The balance of nature, and our attempts to refuse it.

The cycles of nature are completely different than any human cycle that has been created (aside from the basic birth to death cycles, which as much as we try to, we can not change.). The cycles of nature are built upon a balance, which has kept the natural world functioning for its millions of years of existence. They are unpredictable and chaotic. They will never come and go in the same way, or even have the same individual effects. The only thing they will do for sure is catalyze the life cycles of all living things. This is what provides the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and everything else that allows life to occur on this planet. Is it disaster? No, disaster entails destruction in a very negative sense. It implies misfortune and death (of course, this itself provides insight to the inner functions of civilized-conquering-rational thought). Is a life cycle something destructive? Of course it is not. There may be death involved in it, but it is not the end of life (as our languages would imply), but the flourishing of life. Nature will replace and renew itself; this is essential to life (the outlook that death is something to be mourned is another part of our self-removal from the whole of nature.). So how does this become a 'disaster'? It's obvious that there is misery involved when things like the earthquake in India, massive floods, ravaging fires, and so on, but why is this? Did the earth in India suddenly open up and devour thousands of bodies or did the movement of the crust (a natural cycle of ecological sustainability) cause the foundations of the unsustainable, above ground structures to be off set, and in most cases, to the point of collapse? Despite our growing up with science fiction and outrageous stories of action and adventure, we know that the Earth does not open up and swallow thousands of lives when an earthquake hits. So the obvious problem is that the misery is caused by the fact that our

towering cities cannot take the cycles of the Earth. This has been the reason for lots of highly paid developers try to create foundations that can take slight movements in the Earth's crust. However, it has not been the reason for a mass rethinking of the foundations of civilized thought. Incidents like this are signs of the Earth screaming, 'enough is enough!' but we're not listening. Instead we come together to combat our loss of domination to nature and work to reclaim our throne. There is something inherently wrong here. What constitutes a disaster? Or better yet, what causes the misery of a disaster? This Earth has been inhabited for millions of years by billions of species, yet civilized humans seem to be the only ones who fear the natural cycles. Why is this? The foundations of civilization are obvious: humans felt that they would modify their surroundings to suit a lifestyle that would provide them with more of what they wanted. Was it all humans? No. Isn't it because we are formed in the image of God, and the Earth is left for our dominion? No, we existed well before civilization and lived as all other species do, but it should be no surprise that the idea of God only arose when it came to tricking the mass of people who would have otherwise been slaughtered by a thoroughly convinced minority. The idea of God/s gave justification for the war humankind would wage on nature to become its' kings. Does this mean that there is no god/creator/external power? No, there is obvious reason for skepticism, but there is no way of knowing either way. Regardless of if God does or does not exist, it is obvious that there is no glory in the mass destruction civilization has caused on nature and its' inhabitants. With or without God, we are headed towards suicide (this fact is widely seen, and it will not be the focus of this essay to deal with this issue more in depth.).

Polluting the Web of Life.

All things are dependent on a web of life; further than they could know exists, in order to perform the bare minimum of survival functions. This dependency is fixed upon the cycles of life, and while there is room for change, it requires balance. When balance is lost at one end of the cycle, the entire web will be affected. This is not uncommon, and that is why nature goes through cycles to keep the balance of life in order. All things follow this basic rule of existence, and those who don't become extinct or fall back in line. This is how life works, whether we like it or not. As the case would be, about 10,000 years ago, a group of Homo sapiens decided they didn't like it. They decided they didn't like it. The mass of Homo sapiens lived by gathering, hunting and in some cases, small scale agriculture (but by no means the sole or primary means of providing the basics of life.). This group decided that they would partake in full-scale stewardship of the Earth. Unlike other groups, this one required a change to the order of things. The amount of change gradually increased as the dependency and surplus led to excesses in population and need for more resources. In line with this change was settlement. In order to consistently grow food, there needed to be a constant and long-term involvement with certain areas of land. This is where the dependency on the web of life moved to become a dependency on sameness. In order to provide for the group, there needed to be a certain amount of food available. Any unforeseen blow to this would result in devastation, as long as alternative means of survival were not available. As any of us can see as we look upon our current situation, that group grew and conquered until it required the entire planet to play different parts in providing the necessary (and increasingly more and more unnecessary) elements for survival. The foundation of this has been stability of the land. The majority of physical structures have risen in the last five centuries and have

required constant maintaining, or they are subject to the laws of gravity. They are built upon the impossible idea that nature will refrain from its' life cycles where we have placed our flags of domination. This brings us to our current state of disasters.

The disaster of dependency.

In the case of an earthquake, non-civilized life would feel little effect. There is always the possibility of a tree falling on an unsuspected animal, but this is in light of our situation; in which a building will collapse, becoming a tomb for thousands of unsuspecting inhabitants. The first situation, which may cause temporary hardship, is by no means a large-scale center of devastation. When a city is torn apart, it becomes a prolonged hardship. The people in the city are dependent upon life following the synthetic cycles of civilization. If there is no food on the shelves at the grocery store, they will starve. If their workplace is smashed by such an incident, they won't have the money to buy food. If something like a fire were to wipe out their living space, they would be left with little and their own lives would be at stake. In all cases, the communities surrounding may provide some help, but what of the case of such magnitude as India's earthquake. The message is clear, as long as we are dependent on some impossible ideal of sustained life cycles in order to meet the needs of a synthetic society, our existence is futile. The earthquake in India is one of many warning signs that our lifestyles are out of balance with nature, and if we don't do something to change it, we face certain extinction. The earthquake of India is an extreme warning, and many may feel that they are living in an area where they are unlikely to share the fate of the thousands of Indians. We need not look far to see the warnings closer to home, or in them for that sake. Almost every day on the news you will hear of the tragic deaths of a family who were sleeping when a fire took their lives and all earthly possessions. Or maybe one member awoke and nearly died while trying to save all the possessions they couldn't live without. The cigarette someone flicked on their yard, or the pot the accidentally left on their stove, or the electrical outlet that was faultily wired, or the gas leak in the furnace may have started the fire. There's a million ways to die in any of our modern structures. A fire is just an example, trying to prevent this inevitable possibility won't keep you from falling down the stairs, or from having a sharper possession seriously wound you in a strange accident that you never thought would happen (especially not to you!). These things happen thousands of times a day and we turn the blame for each incident towards whatever target is available. The reality of the situation is that there is an entire system of thoughts at work here that perpetuate this system.

The failure of control.

Control is a central component to civilization. The control of nature is impossible, as has been shown above. This hasn't stopped us though, our reasons for attempting to control nature's cycles are obvious: they destroy what we work so hard to build and maintain. Erosion takes its toll on the strip malls we build. Gravity takes its toll on skyscrapers (and planes regularly). And when we strip the tops of mountains and hills away, the winds and rains are destroying more and more of the structures we build in their old places. There is no stopping nature, and our attempts will fall back on us. This is especially clear when it comes to 'forest management.' We have specialists who spend years in schools learning how to extract resources from nature, in a way that may

allow some life to still exist beyond its' direct resource needs. This is of course not exempt from the massive deception and corruption that the power we have self-proclaimed has instilled. A forest fire is not a disaster, no matter how hard we pretend one is. What happens in a forest fire is beyond our capacity of knowledge to understand. It is becoming increasingly clear though; that what is taking place is a revitalization of life in the forests. However, when we sanction the remnants of nature off into 'parks,' we have to provide a service to those whose feel they pay for them to not be cut down. That is those 'parks' exist for the amusement of the city living, taxpayers (must unaware of the massive deforestation going on on those lands.). So they have to keep the parks in order for those who come to see them, and to let a fire play itself out naturally could be devastating. So in the name of preservation, a forest fire is doused with chemicals, which will later, find their way back into rivers and streams, soil and air, and the bodies of all life (of course, this also includes unnatural fires, such as those caused by campers without the decency to watch their own flames). There is a fear that the fire will spread to nearby cities. Again, this is the disaster of our dependency. Tribes and animal societies never worried themselves of these things, because they aren't a threat. Fires didn't brew in basements and gas lines, as they obviously don't have these things. They don't wipe out one's surplus if they don't have one. It can be a hardship, but it is not deadly as it is to us. Nonetheless, this doesn't stop us from trying to control nature. We poison the environment and ourselves to give the image that we can sustainably control nature. It is beyond our control.

The faulty foundations of civilization.

The foundations of civilization are built upon shortsightedness. We see only what is resourceful for us, but the entire web of life is beyond our contemplation. When we exterminate insects or rodents, we don't understand why there has been an increase in the population of other 'pests.' The web of life balances itself, when we only see the parts closest to use, and carry forth with no respect for life outside of that, we throw the balance off. When we clear-cut the rainforests, we don't understand why the trees aren't healthy like the ones before. This is because we didn't know that they need bacteria that take hundreds of years to flourish, but we destroyed them all when we cleared out the forest before hand. It's not an issue of lack of knowledge, it's just a fact that civilization has refused to acknowledge: life is too complex to try to understand all of its functions. We aren't meant to understand it all, only to carry out our part of the cycles. When we stepped out of our cycles and set forth towards domination of the planet and its' inhabitants we overlooked this basic fact. Towards the point of near total domination (taking us into the very core of life as we know it, DNA), we are realizing more and more the results of our shortsightedness. Centuries of carefree industrialism have caused massive implications for the ecosystems, and the reality of this has been hitting us in the face and giving us tumors for years now. Obviously, this should be ground for a massive rethinking of the basic assumptions of civilizations. However, it's only led to slight greening of the industrial system and massive trickery on the part of public relations. We still live by the dictum of 'progress by any means necessary.' The circle of 'necessary evils' is constantly expanding to meet the level of resources needed to fuel the death culture. Our rationality of determining what we will allow to happen in order to fill our consumptive lifestyles is pulling from the depths of greed in the name of our representation-turned-god, money. Our air, water, soil, and very essence of life are being polluted. We live by the out-of-sight, out-of-

mind mentality, as we throw out what we feel we have no use for into the heaping trash mounds that surround our cities (and beyond those limits, as our trash is now being poured into space and underwater.). This all to keep up the idea that we are superior, and exist outside the realm of nature, that we have the ability to control it, and determine its' fate that we can reach into the DNA and manipulate evolution to keep up with the diseases (the bi-products of industrial/ technological existence). We are covering our ears to the warnings of nature that this is not so, but that won't keep the consequences from pushing us into extinction. We have to start listening, and ask ourselves, "is it worth it?"

Learning lessons from destruction.

It is beyond obvious that we are not meant to rule nature. What is it that we are holding on to that we can't just let go of? Our mediated existence, the future we constantly look forward to but never reach, anticipation of not having to work anymore to meet the basic needs of survival, all our material possessions that could be wiped away in an unpredictable fire, yet we would be willing to die for. The whole of civilized existence is a burden, on the planet and our own lives. How long will we try to hold up the impossible empire? How long will we try to justify our destruction, when the very thing we are worshipping could destroy us at any second? Our lives are at risk in civilization. We never know what disaster could happen or when, but we are trapped. Everything around us could take our lives and what would we have to show for it aside from a contribution to the impossible dream, and it won't be shedding a tear at your funeral. Disasters are one of the many costs of civilization and settlements, they will occur as long as these things exist. So do we start listening to the warnings or do we learn lessons from societies that function in balance with nature? One solution ends in disaster and the other solution is life. It's up to use to choose which will be our fate and to act upon this decision.

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Kevin Tucker
The Creation of Disaster

Retrieved on February 20th, 2009 from www.insurgentdesire.org.uk
This essay will appear in species traitor 1. It was also written before the earthquake in Seattle, which is ironic in a strange way, but it just makes it all make more sense

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The Suffocating Void

Domestication and Pathological Distraction

Kevin Tucker

February 2015

Contents

The Flesh Machine	5
The Zuckerberg Galaxy	7
Mining the Shallows	11
Producing the Void	15

“It would be imprudent to deny, or even to play down, the profound change which the advent of ‘fluid modernity’ has brought to the human condition. The remoteness and unreachability of systemic structure, coupled with the unstructured, fluid state of the immediate setting of life-politics, change that condition in a radical way and call for a rethinking of old concepts that used to frame its narratives. Like zombies, such concepts are today simultaneously dead and alive.” – Zygmunt Bauman¹

Something has changed. Radically. And for the worst.

It is tellingly difficult to describe something without a name. And that something has quickly crept into our minds and psyche. We call it “social media” or the “social network”, but those words normalize what is a revolutionary change in our relationship to technology. We’re not talking here about a mere platform of technology, we’re talking about a mindset, a constantly flowing stream of information whereby a refusal to participate renders the human, now reduced to the status of a “user”, obsolete.

There has been a distinct turn away from the internet being relegated to a computer and it is now not only with us at all times, but always on, always moving, always watching. The internet has moved from a form of communication to the increasingly predominant one. So much so that the United Nations has declared internet access a human right.² As fiber optic cables are buried in plain sight, Wifi signals permeate our world.

Your muscles twitch. You believe it’s your phone in your pocket, but you’re holding it in your hand³. You didn’t notice you were even checking it. Our immersion into the world of the machine is most notable in how little attention we pay to it.

We expect it and we are expected by it.

This is the suffocating void, the demanding emptiness of Modernity, the obtuse compliance with the domestication process as rendered in binary by programmers.

We need to stop.

Stop our movements, still our minds, silence our devices and for a moment, even just one moment, just be present. It’s not easy. It’s not easy to get there and it’s not easy to stay there. The air is thick, it is difficult to breathe and even harder to get your bearings. It is overwhelming. The weight of our stuff, our drama, our baggage comes crashing in. In our world, stagnancy is the equivalent of death.

We are stuck in constant movement. We become the flood, the rushing waters, a conversation with no beginning, no end, and no content. To our nomadic gatherer-hunter minds, there’s an inkling of familiarity. Our bodies want to move, to flow and respond. But this is not the movement of bodies within a rooted world: it is a trap. We are stuck within the eye of a tornado, so we try to move with it, but it never stops and it never ends. And when you attempt to stop and assess

¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*. Blackwell: Malden, MA. Pg. 8.

² <http://www.wired.com/2011/06/internet-a-human-right/> Retrieved 12-29-2014.

³ This vastly increasing occurrence does have a name: “Phantom Vibration Syndrome”. A word first used in print in 2003 by Robert Jones who reiterated his earlier thoughts ten years later with the following comment: “Whether PVS is the result of tissue over-stimulation, neuro-psychological unconscious bias, a genuine mental health issue, or all of the above, this persistent phenomenon indicates that we long ago crossed the line in the sands of privacy in this “always on” society.”

From: <http://inclusiveworks.com/cn-executive-coaching-corner/phantom-vibration-syndrome-update/> Retrieved 12-29-2014.

the situation, the true horror of our reality, the crushing impact of what the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has aptly labeled “Liquid Modernity” will overcome you.

It will annihilate you.

Our ancestors, our shared lineage that formed our bodies and minds, were driven by movement. Within our crisis, the pathetic reflection of that primal urge is not movement, but restlessness. We are moving, but we are going nowhere. Shuffling to avoid stagnancy. Moving lifelessly to avoid death.

This is not an accident.

Nothing in our reality really is any more. We are a herd of individuals vying for attention in a sea of selfies, tweets and yelps. The ecologist Paul Shepard long ago pointed out how domestication stunts development⁴, but technology derails it. Increasingly unable to find or define ourselves outside of the machine, we move further inwards. And the programmers pull the strings. We learn to express ourselves through the machine and, in doing so, we become one.

Our distraction keeps us from seeing the monumental change taking place: the immersion into a constantly connected, but never grounded social network. We are, so to speak, “always on”. Smart phones, tablets, screens everywhere we look, wireless signals pervading nearly all spaces, check ins, GPS and monitoring equipment constantly reassuring the world that we are here and we are consuming this manufactured reality.

Within decades, we went from being sold the mythos and myths of Progress to rendering the narrative null through immersion. We no longer need to dream of a glorious Future, we are here. Progress is no longer spoken of, but expected and systemic.

Like the Agricultural Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and the Green Revolution before it, the Interface Revolution propels civilization beyond the boundaries and limitations of earlier systems. The firewalls of Jericho have been breached. Progress innovated, the processes integrated.

For the programmers, this is no small feat. This is the dream of every domesticator: people lining up and fighting for the latest technology, fighting for a place in line, paying top dollar for devices with built in tracking and data mining software and willing to remain in debt to sustain the terms of our bondage. Never mind that the world is suffocating under piles of waste, choking down makeshift mines for rare and difficult to extract metals, while workers are forced to sign anti-suicide clauses, villages are displaced, and sustained low budget warfare are both form and function; the expectation isn’t just that all of this will be ignored, but that you, the consumer, will be back for more next year. Or sooner.

And when things are really moving along, not only are the consequences of technology (both internal and external) ignored, they are accepted and justified.

If the architects of Uruk had the foresight, they would have been seething with jealousy over the control and obedience this technocratic dystopia holds.

But in their place we have the ever-present bloated smiles of Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg encoded into the machines we carry. The smiles of billionaires who built their impossibly massive fortunes on our desecrated earth: buried, literally, in a sea of intentionally outdated and short-lived devices. Devices filled with metals mined by the dispossessed under the directives of warlords. Devices built by the displaced and disempowered. Devices awash in toxic residue that dilute into groundwater, streams, rivers, and contaminate oceans.

⁴ See Paul Shepard, *Nature and Madness*. University of Georgia Press: Athens, GA. 1998 and *Coming Home to the Pliocene*. Island Press: Washington DC. 1998.

Devices that whiten the blood stained teeth of programmers, of billionaires: of domesticators.
And their smiles are injected into every aspect of our lives.

The Flesh Machine

“With this new ‘megatechnics’ the dominant minority will create a uniform, all-enveloping, super-planetary structure, designed for automatic operation. Instead of functioning actively as an autonomous personality, man [sic] will become a passive, purposeless, machine-conditioned animal whose proper functions, as technicians now interpret man’s [sic] role, will either be fed into the machine or strictly limited and controlled for the benefit of de-personalized, collective organizations.” - Lewis Mumford⁵

Lewis Mumford long ago made the observation that the first components of the “Megamachine”, the infusion of technology and society, were made of flesh and blood. It has long been the dream of the technocrats to make the flesh the last. While Mumford was talking about the coordinated efforts it took to build monuments and to clear and plow fields in the Mesolithic era, the programmers of our time just want to remove the clunkiness and messiness of their apparatus from our view.

This was the vision of Progress that we had been sold.

The Future would be better. The Machine would deliver us from drudgery. Its “apparent purpose”, as stated by former advertising executive turned neo-Luddite, Jerry Mander, “is to eliminate human ailments and human unhappiness..., to expand the human potential, and to create a world of abundance for human enjoyment.” Meanwhile driving in the “unstated purpose” to “fulfill the inherent drive of technological society to feed its own evolutionary cravings, to expand its domination of the both Earth and space, and to complete the utter conversion of nature into commodity form.”⁶

For many of us, the failures of Progress are no surprise. This is a mythos as distraction: your sacrifice now will benefit you later. It is not only a religious imperative, it is the origin of religious thought only to be readapted as seen fit through time. A cosmological delayed return economy⁷.

And within Modernity, that adaptation grew into and through the allure of new technology. Change comes into the picture.

Marshall McLuhan spotted it with the printing press, Jerry Mander spotted it in the television, when Mumford saw the thread, he saw strong hints at the potential of the computer, but he seemingly would have hoped it could have not gotten to the point where we are now: change is expected, integration is constant. Speed itself, as John Zerzan aptly notes⁸, has become virtue.

We have suddenly found ourselves at a strange impasse where narratives have collided. The need for the sales pitch of Progress has been surpassed by the want for the new. We aren’t ques-

⁵ Lewis Mumford. *The Myth of the Machine*. Harcourt, Brace & World: New York. 1966, Pg. 3.

⁶ Jerry Mander. *In the Absence of the Sacred*. Sierra Club Books: San Francisco. 1992, Pg 190.

⁷ The link between domestication and religion is vital. I’ve touched on it elsewhere and will be elaborating on it in upcoming works. A solid book on the subject is Morris Berman’s *Wandering God*. State University of New York Press: Albany, 2000.

⁸ See John Zerzan’s on-point essay “Faster!” in this issue of *Black and Green Review*.

tioning the expectation that we are always available, “always on”, we are lining up for the newest devices to further those intrusions.

Fighting *for* them.

Getting to this point didn’t happen over night, but even within the history of technology, it all happened with unthinkable speed. The mobile phone took a remarkably fast slide from toy of the ultra-rich to nearly universal acceptance. By 2013, 91% of the adult population in the US owned at least one.⁹

The unprecedented nature of this has led two industry proponents to applaud the near universal acceptance of mobile phones as the most quickly adopted consumer technology in the history of the world. Gloating in their sickening book, *Networked*, authors Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman state: “the Mobile Revolution has allowed [Information and Community Technologies] to become body appendages allowing people to access friends and information at will, wherever they go.” The key being “always accessible”, but, in true form, they see “the possibility of a continued presence and pervasive awareness of others in the network”¹⁰ positively.

The architects of civilization have long understood that the power of the domestication process lies in its ability to be internalized. The mythos of Progress requires daily affirmation. The programmers, however, realized that affirmation could become integrated.

They just needed to eliminate any distance between a given technology and the user. Lo and behold, a trip into a recently built suburb or even newly gentrified city will show that the eyesore of power lines have been rid from sight. We go wireless so we no longer see the machine as separate. Unsightly and inconvenient wiring goes to routers in corners and under furniture. Corporations sponsor “Wifi Hot Spots” to customers. We remove the wiring from sight to internalize its function.

And this has sadly been effective. Very effective.

What you see when you step into public places are faces illuminated by backlit devices. Groups of teens walking together and each lost in their own virtual presence. 1.3 million car accidents in the US during 2011 were caused by drivers distracted with their cell phones.¹¹ You will see people constantly swiping their screens to look for updates, feeds, messages, or just blindly glancing out of habit at their phones, most seemingly with no recognition of what they are doing.

The conclusion of the Megamachine, the necessary step to furthering the goals of Progress, was to eliminate barriers. To make it so we treat phones as an appendage, while the Programmers dream of making them one.

To make us complicit.

To make us comply without even noticing it.

I have long held that the genius of civilizers is falsely attributed to manufacturing needs. Simply put, they aren’t that smart and we aren’t that gullible.

What it does come down to is an understanding of what a human being needs. We are social animals. In our minds and bodies, even when lost in some ridiculous App on an iPhone, we are trying to reconcile the world of the hunter-gatherer with the path that Modernity has set us on.

⁹ According to a PEW Research survey: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/06/cell-phone-ownership-hits-91-of-adults/> Retrieved 12-29-2012.

¹⁰ Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked*. MIT Press: Cambridge. 2012, Pg. 12.

¹¹ <http://www.textinganddrivingsafety.com/texting-and-driving-stats/> Retrieved 12-29-2014. That’s 23% of car accidents in case you were wondering.

For the most part, our emotional and mental free fall is held in place so long as our inertia is matched by social rebounding.

Community is etched in our Stone Age soul. We don't just want others; we need them.

And herein lies the tragedy.

This is our animality being torn from us, repackaged and then sold back to us. We want movement, we want connectivity, we want contact, and, in the absence of the physical, the electric options are literally inescapable waves penetrating our minds and bodies.

This is how Progress was sold to us and this is why we buy into this Void. Amongst 7 billion people and counting, in a sea of unending electric synapse and stimuli: we are lost, alone, and confused.

While it may be utterly unrecognizable, the mound builders of Mesopotamia and the high-tech sweatshop worker serve the same function: to become the apparatus so that we may consume it.

And that downward spiral is driven by our consumption.

The Zuckerberg Galaxy

"There is a huge need and a huge opportunity to get everyone in the world connected, to give everyone a voice and to help transform society for the future. The scale of the technology and infrastructure that must be built is unprecedented, and we believe this is the most important problem we can focus on." – Mark Zuckerberg¹²

Facebook didn't invent social media, but it has become iconic in its acceptance and usage. While often being joked about as a scourge, near the end of 2014 more than 1.35 billion people logged on at least once per month¹³. That surpasses the population of China.

And it continues to grow.

As much as the mainstream celebrates social media, even attempting to posture it as the tool of liberation during the Arab Spring (though ironically demonizing it when it was used in the same way in the Ferguson Uprisings of 2014 and beyond), our sense of how radical this change in form really is becomes lost.

Marshall McLuhan famously made the case that the "Gutenberg technology", the printing press, had made universal change in the way its users and consumers saw the world. This pattern, beginning with the written word, cannot be overstated. Yet it is so often lost within civilization because everything we know is taught through the lens of symbolic culture: the internalized whispers of domesticators reinforcing our own perceived split from the wild world and necessary dependency on masters. This is how domestication works, but the purpose of technology is to update form and context. And as McLuhan famously observed: form dictates function, the medium is the message.

So his words for the impact of the printed word hold equally true for the updated technology: when a technology is introduced "if it gives new stress or ascendancy to one or another of our senses, the ratio among all of our senses is altered. We no longer feel the same, nor do our eyes and ears and other sense remain the same."¹⁴

¹² http://readwrite.com/2012/02/01/zuckerbergs_letter_to_shareholders_personal_relationships_are_the_fundamental_unit_of_our
Retrieved 12-31-2014.

¹³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/11194049/Facebook-profits-pass-1bn-as-more-users-log-on-every-day.html> Retrieved 1-1-2015

¹⁴ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Signet: New York. 1969, pg 35.

Technology flattens our world by reducing our reliance on senses while over stimulating particular sensory input. Our brains are, to put it simply, overworked and underwhelmed. Mediation and representation as evidenced by blogs, Youtube channels, Facebook feeds and Twitter handles.

This is the form.

This is the form that creates a world filled with crushing depression, alienation, suffering and anxiety. A National Center for Health Statistics study found that by 2008 the usage of antidepressants in the US had gone up 400% over the previous decade across all demographics.¹⁵ The iPhone was released in 2007. The researcher's period of study from 2005-2008 saw an increase of Facebook users from 5.5 million to 100 million.¹⁶ That is an increase of over 1700%. And this isn't even touching on the horrid and dire social and ecological consequences across the world.

The point isn't to say that Facebook caused these things, but, along with all other facets of the social network (both past, present and future), it exacerbates them. It amplifies on exponential terms.

The content and platforms drive each other. But they always have.

Hyper-internalized and portable technology is the form.

Domestication is the function.

As the domesticators developed technology to employ their will, the ability to make change with intentionality arose. No longer was power in the scythe and the stored grains. The agrarian curse of drudgery and toil for the perceived pay off in the heavens paved the way (literally) to updated industrial forms.

And the mythos evolved.

Collective consciousness was slowly channeled into individual consumerism. It is no surprise that the overstressed working class in early industrializing nations thought their liberation lied within possessing the machine collectively, nor is it surprising that the antidote to that notion was selling individual heavens on an increasingly closer horizon.

Progress remains. Mythos adapt.

Technology increasingly spread from the means to the purpose itself. The time clock led to the pocket watch to the wristwatch and now to the cell phone. We embrace the objects that confine our minds to think on an artificial sense of place and self.

Our world becomes both larger and smaller, so we turn to the machine, to this bartered identity. Even in a sea of flux, the technology itself increasingly becomes the constant. It becomes the savior.

Chellis Glendinning called this process by what it is: "techno-addiction". "In such a society people have historically become obsessed with anything that helps them to cope with the trauma of it all."¹⁷

We buy to know we're alive.

And, increasingly, we Tweet to remind everyone that we're still here.

Facebook's creator, Mark Zuckerberg, saw the writing on the wall. He didn't just sell it: he bought it. His rise from a computer programmer at Harvard up to the richest 20 people in the world is sadly well documented and pathetically emulated.

¹⁵ <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db76.pdf> Retrieved 1-2-2015.

¹⁶ <http://news.yahoo.com/number-active-users-facebook-over-230449748.html> Retrieved 1-2-2015.

¹⁷ Chellis Glendinning, *My Name is Chellis & I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*. Shambhala: Boston. 1994, Pg. 101.

While not coming up from the bottom of the social ladder, his story is more of an emotional rags-to-riches triumph. The reader can relate. A teenager in the 90s, a product of great technological change and raised in an atmosphere where “play” went from being outside with friends to inside and playing video games. Or, in Zuckerberg’s case, programming them.

This story is drenched in the turmoil of responding to adolescence through increasingly mediated means. The starting point for what would become Facebook was a site that rated other students by their looks. It should not be surprising that the origin point of Facebook is driven equally by a bully’s entitlement and an unrelenting sense of insecurity. And that is the tone that carried on.

Facebook didn’t arise in a vacuum. This is hardly even history at this point; we’re talking about websites that increasingly dominated the social atmosphere over the past decade. It’s hardly necessary for me to recant them.

What is important here is how and why Facebook took off.

The obnoxiously entitled “Blogosphere” matched with former Facebook contender, MySpace, both served, as necessary steps towards what social networking would become. The blogs were driven by an attempt at a, and I’m biting my tongue here, “grassroots” sense of giving voices and reporting. Often centered around contemporary topics, their necessary role was less in what was being said, but littering the fairy tale notion of the internet as an “information super-highway” with opinions equally weighed with actual reporting and research. A huge part of the lucrative Search Engine Optimization (SEO) field existing relied on the hopes for bloggers to have their posts on a subject get the highest ranked search results in Google or whatever else is currently being used.

Blogs quickly became an accepted resource. The internet is, after all, marketing. A blog is a brand for an individual. A public face: a personalization of a perspective that transfers the subject from content to provider. This is the cult of personality moving from the television, books, politicians and newspapers to overly excitable and entertaining personalities. These people were enthralling because they could be you, the spectator. This was a move driven home even further via Youtube not long after.

MySpace was the place to market the self under the guise of a place to keep in touch with friends. A place to sell the image of yourself that you wish to portray. Echoed along the lines of Twitter, where irrelevant quips of 140 characters, and in an increasingly entangled and over-sharing, yet selective, web, the social network became accepted enough that the nearly stalker-esque Facebook was ready to take its place.

The idea of posting your quips and selling yourself was worthless unless it was the main feature: the News Feed. This is a sea of words projected onto a constantly shifting wall as if it was news. From the hyper-personal to the irrelevant, it’s laid out flatly for your selected audience.

And there are no mistakes here.

These moves are intentional. They are marketing.

Sold as a supplement to the life anyone wants to live, they have become the main course. And they become the platform for broadcasting the life you want others to see. Far from being a tight knit group of friends, social networking sites, as Jose van Dijck states in his critical history, “forge personal, professional or geographical connections and encourage weak ties.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press: Oxford. 2013, Pg. 8

This is that urge that we all have within us: the need for community. It is your inner-hunter-gatherer and their band associations.

An impulse redirected for a reality supplanted.

We spread ourselves widely. We feel that having information about others is as good as having actual relationships with them. And every time we log on, we are selling ourselves.

The grotesque level of acceptance of the social network is apparent in how Zuckerberg basks in it: "Think about what people are doing on Facebook today. They're keeping up with their friends and family, but they're also building an image and identity for themselves, which in a sense is their brand. They're connecting with the audience that they want to connect to."

And to always end on a high note: "It's almost a disadvantage if you're not on it now."¹⁹

We buy this reality because we sell it. If you want to take part in this society, if you want to stay connected with friends and family, both close and distant: here is the platform, here is the place to do it.

It almost seems ridiculous to give this platform such intense scrutiny. In the timeline of civilization, it won't even be a fragment of a blip. But the spread, grasp and ramifications of Facebook, its intentional and unspoken uses, are monumental. You simply cannot escape them. It's not as simple as deactivating an account (it was years before deleting was even an option).

These have become the terms, the grounding on which this late stage of Modernity stands.

The narrative of Progress hardly needs to sell a distant future; it has created an eternal present. And in doing so, it has removed the presence. It removes the essence of being human.

This is change.

This is change at a rate and depth that is unprecedented even in the nasty, short and brutish history of civilization. Amongst all of the critiques of technology, this is something that was predicted in dystopian terms, but the reality is far scarier and by the time most of us noticed its effectiveness, we are at a loss for outlets and terms to even discuss this ongoing and worsening epidemic.

The News Feed ticks.

Against the backdrop of a 24 hour "news" cycle, it is a fitting backdrop: the techno-addicted need constant stimulation. Going outside hardly cuts it unless it's for taking selfies or a necessary part of the sale for the projected self.

The Self, driven by hyper-individualistic consumerism, takes a form and precedence that could make even the most rampant egoist blush. This isn't just posturing; it's an attachment to a projected and widely cast image. An online persona is increasingly less foreign to our sense of identity. McLuhan was hardly off base when he claimed, "schizophrenia may be a necessary consequence of literacy."²⁰ In the digital age, schizophrenia may very well be a prerequisite.

It is hardly surprising that cyber-bullying has become such a massive issue. The bully and bullying are no longer physically confined to a physical place. And the amount of information and sources of self-doubt of the victim are broadcast far more widely.

And these are the terms on which marketers and programmers think. The social network is the place where they act.

¹⁹ <http://www.wired.com/2009/06/mark-zuckerberg-speaks/> Retrieved 12-31-2014.

²⁰ McLuhan, 1969, pg. 32.

Mining the Shallows

“It is a common fallacy, though, to think of platforms as merely *facilitating* networking activities; instead, the construction of platforms and social practices is mutually constitutive.”²¹ – Jose von Dijck

The link between social networking and technological production is vital. The point is, after all, to find ways to keep participation constant and consistent: to be always on.

Capitalists are no strangers to malicious forms of aggressive marketing. For a technocrat like Zuckerberg, it’s clearly a two way street. New phone technology allows for updates to his system and updates to Facebook sell new phones.

The mobile industry is, after all, a force to be reckoned with. An industry report projects revenues to pass \$2 trillion by 2017. As it stands now, 3.2 billion people are active mobile network subscribers.²²

This is a massive economic force. Planned obsolescence is no new concept in terms of acquiring wealth. As the technology advances, so does the life expectancy decrease. But as the cell phone and its programs become the only acceptable form of communication, their monumental costs simply become a begrudgingly accepted burden.

The average smartphone in 2013 cost \$337.²³ Imagine running into you from a decade ago and saying that’s what you would be paying for a phone and that it would only have an expected lifespan of 2 years, at best. The absurdity of it is lost both in the cost of owning and using a cellphone (the average 2013 bill in the US weighed in over \$700 per year²⁴) but, as we’ll get to in the following section, the ecological and social costs far outweigh all others.

Beyond planned obsolescence lies functional obsolescence: the perception that a technology is no longer functional in comparison to its contemporary options. You see this rampantly in the cell phone world where even replacing a battery or charger on a 2-year-old phone can be a feat. Just as with the News Feed, if you can’t keep up, you are left to believe that you will drown.

But the function here is key.

The technologies being actively developed and sold serve a single purpose: to further entrap the user into the social network.

To become the algorithm.

When Facebook finally went public in 2012, Zuckerberg spoke to investors like old friends: “Advertising works most effectively when it’s in line with what people are already trying to do. And people are trying to communicate in a certain way on Facebook — they share information with their friends, they learn about what their friends are doing —so there’s really a whole new opportunity for a new type of advertising model within that.”²⁵

The very notion of creating an all-encompassing platform for communication is to expand into previously unreachable areas. This is why Facebook bought Foursquare: an application that

²¹ *ibid*, pg. 6.

²² <http://www.gsma-mobile-economy.com/GSMA%20Mobile%20Economy%202013.pdf> Retrieved 12-31-2014.

²³ <http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS24461213> Retrieved 1-2-2015.

²⁴ <http://www.dailytech.com/Average+Mobile+Phone+Bill+in+US+is+Growing+Despite+Competition/article34485.htm> Retrieved 1-2-2015.

²⁵ <http://content.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1644040,00.html> Retrieved 12-31-2014.

“checks in” and posts on your News Feed where you physically go. Not to be left behind, they also purchased Atlas: an application that tracks offline purchases.²⁶

This information is key to automation.

Every time you ask Google or Siri a question, Google, Apple and the NSA are listening.

The goal of programmers is to track your movements, decisions, thoughts and statements to create algorithms to predict and influence your actions. The cell phone, an early platform for GPS tracking, is the perfect platform for this. It is on your person, it is your electronic leash and confidant. It’s an object you can stare at with intent when you don’t feel like making eye contact or uncomfortable small talk.

And it is a tool to continually gather information about you.

Little is telling about the power of the temporary and shallow nature of new information from the Void than how quickly the outrage over the exposed US government’s far and wide reaching surveillance programs died. Nothing changed, but everything was accepted. If the alternative option was to give up on cell phones and social networking, then it was an uncomfortable, but possibly necessary evil.

The users could live with it.

Less surprising was the FBI’s official call out to social media corporations and platforms requiring them to offer a “back door” to organize, gather and collect information that might have been unavailable through real world social networking.²⁷

Though science fiction writers might have dreamed being the first to come up with a technology as absurd as Google Glass (a literal technologically infused lens) it is in the more common forms of technology that the programmers claim their victories.

We chose to take part in this inexplicably vast social experiment and database without seeing it as a choice.

Again, this comes down to a redirection of impulses. The world that we live in is one in which every decision, purchase and action that we make has dire consequences across this globalized, technologically dependent world.

This is not the connectedness that hunter-gatherers knew and felt.

This is far from the relationship with the breath that moves through all things which our wild souls are intertwined with.

This is a vast, intentional, disconnected hyper-dependence. Our minds are wired for nomadic movements within familiar landscapes. That is how we are shaped. Our hunter-gatherer minds are bioregional in practice and global in spirit, but not consequence.

The unnatural world that civilization has created and Modernity has accelerated are simply too large for our minds to even comprehend. Our inability to empathize with the consequences of our actions is literally out of our world.²⁸ Programmers and marketers know this.

And they prey upon it.

So it is hardly ironic when Zuckerberg famously proclaimed: “A squirrel dying in front of your house may be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa.”²⁹ The use of the word ‘relevant’ obscures the horrific confluence of our realm of being and our

²⁶ <http://www.wired.com/2014/12/facebook-atlas-google/> Retrieved 1-3-2015.

²⁷ <http://www.cnet.com/news/fbi-we-need-wiretap-ready-web-sites-now/> Retrieved 12-30-2014.

²⁸ I touch on this point in more detail in my essay ‘Everywhere and Nowhere: the Pathology of the Machine’ from my book, *For Wildness and Anarchy* (Black and Green Press, 2009). It’s also, ironically, easy to find online.

²⁹ David Kirkpatrick. *The Facebook Effect*. Simon & Schuster: New York. Pg. 181.

realm of understanding. Zuckerberg, like all other programmers, knows that when faced with the challenge of addressing the consequences of our actions, it's far easier to sink back into the reality that they've sold us than to address the one we live in. We'll get back to this, but it's pertinent for understanding the pathological drive of the social network for directing our impulses and how they can do it.

And the reality here is frightening.

If there is a canary in this coalmine, it should be Nicholas Carr's excellent book, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains*. As far as I'm concerned, it's the *Silent Spring* for the crisis of the further integration of the internet and technology into every aspect and moment of our lives.

There are many points he touches on that are crucial to understanding how our interactions with technology, particularly the internet, impact the function and development of our minds.

While programmers like Zuckerberg extol the faux-virtues of transparency and giving voice to individuals through their platforms, the subtext is about instilling their vision into our minds through channeling synapses. Literally.

When we buy into or accept their mythos that the internet exists to make the world a freer, better place, stuffed beyond recognition with information, we are accepting an argument on their turf. And that turf is a confusing place.

There is almost nowhere on the internet where you aren't being sold products: be it physical, ideological or cosmological. This is the message in the medium. Information, relationships, connections and so on are all consumable. Quantifiable in nature, ever expanding in form: this is the world stripped of life and coded in binary and algorithms.

That information that you were after, that pressing question you had to Google, that curiosity that you had? Those are all starting points. The internet does act like a web. Every point is measured in its relation to others. It is a multiple-choice adventure at all times and if you weren't aware, the hyperlinks can sell you on directions that flashing ads might not.

They want you to click. They beg you to click.

Once you do, you start down their rabbit hole: this fog of consumption of information and products, opinions and trivia. There's no explanation for how you found these random factoids when you paste them in on your News Feed, but there's a science to it. Click. Share. Integrate.

At its heart, this visceral assault is not a new concept. We've known from the inception and integration of the television how this external and contrived fantasy (especially when driven by fright) deeply impacts our fight or flight synapse. We are overwhelmed with options even if they all lead to the same complicity.

This is how our brains work.

And this is what the programmers know.

That is why they can adjust algorithms on Facebook as a social experiment to see how the tone of a News Feed can impact worldviews. They call this "emotional contagion". To date it's been clearly exposed at least once as part of a weeklong emotional experiment conducted through tweaking the tone of shared content in your News Feed on Facebook.³⁰

This is your cage.

³⁰ <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/> Retrieved 12-30-2014.

While we are told that life without civilization was a struggle, we ignore that while things can happen fast, our minds and bodies have evolved to cope with them. Should we suddenly realize that we're being tracked or should a hunt take an immediate turn: our bodies are built to respond.

On the other hand, we were not built for prolonged exposure to over-stimulation. If anything, our inability to process the overwhelming input from life in Modernity is testimony to how much more relaxed our nomadic hunter-gatherer life really was. And yet we continually attack and offend our sensibilities. The result is exhausting, stimulating, exciting, depressing, crushing, lost, and searching all at the same time.

In true form, that is what the internet looks like: a barrage of ads, information, stimulus, and options. It is a visceral and literal distraction.

Following McLuhan, being on the internet forces the use of some senses at the expense of others: "We can assume" Carr observes, "that the neural circuits devoted to scanning, skimming, and multitasking are expanding and strengthening, while those used for reading and thinking deeply, with sustained concentration, are weakening or eroding."³¹

And the biology behind this is worse.

Not only are we impacting what senses are being used; we are altering the way our brains take in information. To move from short-term to long-term memory, a particular event or piece of knowledge requires a sense of depth, a memorable moment. It stops the flood of input in our waking lives long enough for the mind to find a reason to hold on to it.

As enraging as your online arguments can get or as off-putting as something might be, when read on the internet, the form dictates function in the mind. In a sea of distraction, all things are given equal footing. And our minds don't take the sensory overload of one site more seriously than others.

We are losing the ability to remember.

Our brain treats the internet as an external source: the very warehouse of information that the programmers have sold to us. We don't need to retain this full information because we can access it at any time through our computers or, more commonly, our phone. To say, "Google it" is hardly a passive phrase, it is an intrinsic change in the way they we find information.

We no longer gather it; we just seek it out when we need to reference it.

And then it is released again into the internet. This is not an intentional process on our part, but it is absolutely underpinning the nature of our relationship with the world through the megamachine. This is the suffocating void: that fogged sense of place, filled with the pressures to maintain existence while always searching for another reason to prolong the presence.

As Carr states, we are "outsourcing memory" and in doing so, we are outsourcing function. This is our integration with the machine, our delusional participation in the Spectacle and yet it's as though we're not even there.

It's worth quoting Carr at length here:

"The influx of competing messages that we receive whenever we go online not only overloads our working memory; it makes it harder for our frontal lobes to concentrate our attention on any one thing. The process of memory consolidation can't even get started. And, thanks once again to the plasticity of our neuronal pathways, the more we use the Web, the more we train our brain to be distracted – to process

³¹ Nicholas Carr. *The Shallows*. WW Norton: New York. 2011, Pg. 141.

information very quickly and very efficiently but without sustained attention. That helps explain why many of us find it hard to concentrate even when we're away from our computers. Our brains become adept at forgetting, inept at remembering. Our growing dependence on the Web's information stores may in fact be the product of a self-perpetuating, self-amplifying loop. As our use of the Web makes it harder for us to lock information into our biological memory, we're forced to rely more and more on the Net's capacious and easily searchable artificial memory, even if it makes us shallower thinkers."³²

The machine is not controlling your mind: the machine is absorbing it.

This eternal present comes at the death of memory while the future hangs in the balance. It is widely noted that nomadic hunter-gatherers lack a sense of anything other than cyclical time. Living within the realm of an immediate return subsistence, it's easy to conflate our sense of immediate gratification. These are two greatly opposing realities: one lives in honor of the past and the future, the other exists at their expense.

The real world struggles to keep up. Amazon, the largest internet retailer in the US, pushed Sunday delivery as an option, is working on same day delivery, always offers one or two day shipping, and is just one of many corporations trying to cash in on streaming and immediately available content.

While our nomadic hunter-gatherer lives are typified by immediate return interactions, this sad repackaging of immediate gratification is an entirely different beast. It sacrifices long term relationships and sustainability for short-term acquisition. Another impulse to feed. Another plug to fill. A furthering of our integration with technology.

We are addicts.

But we wind up here for the same reason, every single time: we are lost. Our minds are wandering instead of our bodies, but they remain untethered and the internet provides an oasis for the search.

This is the restlessness.

The search is trying to find a light within the void. But the search is complacency. As long as we are lost, we are logged on. Our memory is as long as our News Feed. Our feelings are as deep as our memories.

Our tragedy is that as our world burns, we lose the very ability to even remember it was there. And so civilization pummels along. Taking all of us with it.

Producing the Void

"In the event of non-accidental injuries (including suicide, self mutilation, etc.), I agree that the company has acted properly in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, and will not sue the company, bring excessive demands, take drastic actions that would damage the company's reputation or cause trouble that would hurt normal operations."³³ – Foxconn's required anti-suicide clause for employees.

³² Ibid, Pg. 194.

³³ http://shanghaiaist.com/2010/05/26/translated_foxconn_employee_non-su.php Retrieved 1-1-2015.

It's easy to see the abyss of nothingness that is being sold to us as a First World problem, yet the fact that nearly a quarter of the Earth's population regularly uses Facebook indicates the depth of its pervasiveness.

Our daily lives, now more than ever, the fabric of our "social" lives, are soaked in blood.

While our ability to comprehend or empathize wanes, our footprint spreads exponentially.

Let's start with those phones.

Most of our phones are made in Shenzhen, China. And it is a city built on cell phones. "Twenty-five years ago it was a fishing village surrounded by rice paddies. Today it is an urban sprawl of 12 million people" observes journalist Fred Pearce.³⁴

This is the home of Foxconn's now notorious sweatshops.

Foxconn runs the leading technological production facilities. This is currently where most Apple and Sony products are made, Blackberrys as well in their heyday. The reason they got some news was shocking: employees were forced to sign an anti-suicide clause. According to Wikipedia's numbers, up till 2013, at least 24 workers had killed themselves: the wretched working conditions, exposure to toxic chemicals, monotony of industrialized production, and overall depression being the clear common causes.

The most common method of suicide was jumping from the rooftops of the factories and corporate housing (if we can use the term that liberally), so the response of the corporation? Install netting around the rooftops to catch jumping workers.

Foxconn, for many living beings, sounds like hell.

The marketers promote the myth throughout civilization that you have a choice. And to some degree it is true. You can not purchase a smartphone, the catch is that it is that you are expected to. Consumers laud this as a choice: you lose your right to complain once you bought in. This is the Litmus Test for compliance in the Void. The presumptions here, however, are disgustingly off.

The presumption carried on is that people go to sweatshops because they want jobs. This may be true for some, but there's a long standing colonial and imperial legacy that is endemic (predominantly, though not exclusively) throughout the southern hemisphere whereby subsistence societies live in areas that would otherwise be useful for, let's say, the production of rare earth metals.

In some places, it's just easier to demolish any access to subsistence just to build factories and create a work force. If you can no longer harvest from the land directly, then you need to buy food.

But back to the rare earth minerals example (believe me, there are many options), your phone would not exist without them. Here in Shenzhen, tantalum is used to help make phone batteries lighter and last longer. That tantalum, however, comes from Congo, where forests are cleared by military leaders (often not on the State's side) to build what can only be considered shanty-mining villages.

And who works there? Prisoners, those caught in the crossfire, and, quite often, children.³⁵

And these places are horrifically dangerous.

³⁴ Fred Pearce. *Confessions of an Eco-Sinner: Tracking Down the Sources of My Stuff*. Beacon Press: Boston. 2008, Pg. 200. Despite it's liberal guilt sounding title, it's actually a really great book.

³⁵ Ibid. Pgs 203-206. Kevin Bales' *Disposable People* (University of California Press: Berkeley. 2000) is also an indispensable source on the matter.

But for your phone to be lightweight and last longer off the charger, a constant and ongoing civil war will find bodies to fill, dig, and exhume those mines.

Then those materials are processed and assembled by overworked and tired hands in China before being sold to you. And while this new phone has a separate light to notify you when something is happening on your Facebook News Feed, every part of that contraption was possibly the worst part of another dozen people's lives.

And this goes on for every single piece of technology that you have in your pocket.

Never mind that those metals are both rare and irreplaceable.³⁶ Or on that they are on the verge of non-existence.³⁷ Or that they and their processing are absolutely toxic.³⁸ We are killing the earth, poisoning water ways, driving species to extinction, forcing labor, keeping sweatshops open, and on, for a device that allows nearly half of the earth's population to remain constantly in contact without ever just being there.

And this is how civilization ends: consumed by an uncaring and unfeeling impulse to reach out to those who are strangers surrounding us.

Lest you think the problem is simply capitalism, those operating the mines, work camps, poppy fields and mono-cropped farms are quite often socialist revolutionaries. No matter who is in control: this is the point that Modernity has gotten us into.

It is a quagmire of drifting along on limited resources with a sense of infinite wants and no fulfillment.

And it is here that our lives, the lives of all beings on this planet and the earth itself are bound. And as we sheepishly reload our News Feed, this is the world that is passing us by.

It's not okay.

We're not okay.

The problems that surround us, the emptiness of Modernity, the thing that has us looking at screens instead of into eyes is a distraction. It is life automated. As you shudder away from that frightening noise, the clutter, the crowds, the moment you look up mindlessly from your phone; you are confronted with all of this.

And it is too much.

It is suffocating. It is an endless nothingness, a weight on the lungs, a turning in the stomach, an unidentified repulsion.

The temptation is to look away. That is why we don't even have the words to address this plague, to address how the hardwired matrix became an invisible leash. We aren't confronting it. And the programmers, the domesticators of Modernity, are counting on the fact that we are losing the very ability to even situate or reconcile our loss and context.

They are counting on our inability to recognize the world around us.

And yet this is not the world as it exists.

The earth is suffering from the consequences, but it is still alive. The wildness refuses to be tamed. It refuses to succumb to the machine.

Our hunter-gatherer minds and bodies know this, despite everything that we have been taught. These misdirected impulses and synapses linger amidst the confusion. That is why we still reach out in the first place.

³⁶ <http://gizmodo.com/the-metals-in-your-phone-arent-just-rare-theyre-irre-1477904295> Retrieved 12-28-2014.

³⁷ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360544212008055> Retrieved 12-28-2014.

³⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/rare-earth-mining-china-social-environmental-costs> Retrieved 12-28-2014.

That is why these caged birds Tweet.

In that moment, that second when we look up, that second when we feel the crushing realness of our circumstance, we are human. We are afraid. We are scared. We are lonely.

And we do have a choice.

If given the chance, these realities will never be reconciled. These words might be etched forever in silicon and roam electrical feeds so long as the power lasts, but that feeling is real. This world is real.

It is our work to smash the distraction. To pull the plug. To render the machines useless.

To see this world the way our bodies feel it and our minds know it, there is no other option but the annihilation of civilization. We have guides. We have instincts.

We have our wildness.

So before we are lost in a sea of unending, constant nothingness: to take the first step, we must first look up. Breathe deep.

And fight back.

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To Speak of Wildness

Kevin Tucker

October 2015

Contents

Perception and the Better Angles of our (Human) Nature	5
The Nature of Language and Language of Nature	7
Wildness vs Wilderness	9
Perception and the Living Earth	10
Wild Existence, Passionate Resistance	13

“He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of infants are clear to her. But for him this dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this world, that he was set on this world as a stranger.”¹

- Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature*

“It is not inherently in the nature of the world that it should consist of things that may or may not be appropriated by people.”²

- Tim Ingold

The memory is vivid.

It was nighttime and the sky had been dark for hours. My wife and I were driving on a stretch of road, cars were clustered, but it was neither busy nor desolate. There was some space between the cars ahead of us, but a good number of cars following. And then there was a sudden, unmistakable flash of white dotted with brown. It moved quickly and it was gone. Had we blinked, we could have easily missed it entirely.

Neither of us blinked. We knew immediately that what had flown feet in front of our windshield was a Great Horned Owl. There was a stillness to it, as if it all happened in slow motion. Even with a decent amount of traffic, that owl had flown in front of our car only.

And this wasn't the only time. It wasn't the first and it certainly wouldn't be the last, yet this time there was no question: the owl wanted to be seen.

Owls are often solitary animals. As someone who has dedicated a fair amount of time to tracking them, I can assure you of this. There are some variations to that. Barred Owls can be downright social. We have had them swoop in over fires just to inspect.

This, however, is far from the norm.

Owls are as excellent at camouflage as they are hunting carried out with a nearly imperceptible hush to their flight. Even expert owl trackers who literally wrote the book on the subject, Patricia and Clay Sutton, observed that “it is amazing how [owls] can seem to simply not exist until the perfect angle makes one visible.” This doesn't change the fact that despite their invisibility, owls “are all around us.”³

When an owl wants to be seen, it is awe-inspiring. An extremely different feeling than the joy of finding Great Horned Nestlings or catching the flash of Screech Owl eyes as light crosses thickets at night. For us, that flood of feeling is always eclipsed by one thought in particular: confirmation. The Great Horned Owl is our messenger of death.

When death comes for a relative, a friend, an acquaintance of those close to us, there can be heaviness in the air that is inexplicable otherwise. Things feel off. My wife and I have regrettably become accustomed to it over the years. We start doing a mental inventory of whom we know that might be going through some turmoil or difficulty. But when the Great Horned Owl shows herself, little doubt remains: something has happened.

The night that stood out so clearly in my memory stands out because it was the time when the rational, domesticated part of my brain broke down. When the probability of coincidence was

¹ Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature*. Harper and Row: New York, 1978. Pg. 1

² Tim Ingold, ‘Time, Memory, and Property’ in Widlok and Tadesse, *Property and Equality Volume 1: Ritualisation, Sharing, Egalitarianism*. Berghahn: New York, 2007. Pg 165.

³ Patricia and Clay Sutton, *How to Spot an Owl*. Chapters Publishing: Shelburne, VT, 1994. Pg. 18.

worn too thin and the veneer cracked. There is something here. Sure enough, we found out fairly quickly that there had been an accident. A family member had been involved in a fatal collision. While he was revived on the scene, the driver was not. That happened nearly 1,000 miles away and at the same time the owl came.

This was nearly 12 years ago now. Circumstances changed, but the Great Horned has come numerous times. As grandparents passed, as relatives took their own lives or succumb to cancer or diabetes, as family and their acquaintances overdosed; every time, we get the news from this majestic winged hunter.

The silent flier speaks up.

That night opened a door of perception that I had only casually noticed before. The Great Horned was a messenger of death, but there were many others. There was a distinct air of familiarity and comfort in the Mockingbird that sat on my grandfather's casket during his funeral and watched silently. A Rattlesnake made themselves known to indicate that a family member had died from heroin overdose, a fitting messenger for having injected too much venom. A calming White Tailed Deer that stood before me as I nervously wondered about my as-yet-unborn daughter. And there was a Flycatcher screeching outside of our home to warn us about an instigator amongst us.

These messengers were there all along; I just hadn't put the pieces together. I still feel discomfort even speaking of them openly, but I cannot deny them. And I am only scratching at the surface here.

Seeking council from the wild isn't a matter of being fully integrated into the world around you. These messengers don't come because you seek them; it is not their purpose to serve you. They are simply doing what they do: responding with empathy to impulses that are more apparent to them than to us. That we are continually missing such messages is on us, our own aloof non-presence in the world.

This isn't meant to downplay the breach of any civilized social contract that is happening when wild beings are bringing news, warnings and offering direction. Considering our sanitized sense of intellectual superiority and deadening of senses, it's not surprising to know that something like Laurens van der Post's account of a hunter-gatherer of the Kalahari telling him: "We Bushman have a wire here,' he tapped his chest, 'that brings us news'"⁴ is interpreted as evidence of telepathy. Anything other than pure supernatural power is unthinkable.

That the world speaks to us shouldn't be news. The Lakota-Sioux *Lame Deer* echoes the word of indigenous peoples the world over with statements like this: "You have to listen to all these creatures, listen with your mind. They have secrets to tell. Even a kind of cricket, called *ptewoyake*, a wingless hopper, is used to tell us where to find buffalo."⁵

The writing is in the thickets and the cracks in the wall, yet this isn't the headline. To get messages from wild beings is tantamount to pleading insanity in this society. But those messages are always there. What keeps us from receiving them is our own ability to perceive that they exist.

⁴ Laurens van der Post, *The Lost World of the Kalahari*. Harvest: San Diego, 1958. Pg 260.

⁵ John (Fire) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*. Washington Square Press: New York, 1994. Pg. 136.

Perception and the Better Angles of our (Human) Nature

“In spite of our precious rational process and in spite of our cherished scientific objectivity, we continue to maintain an absolute and unchallengeable distinction between man and the nonhuman. It has occurred that the firmness of this insistence may be one measure of the need we may perceive for justification of our overwhelmingly antibiotic actions.”⁶

- John Livingston, *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation*

And here lies the root of our problem: the process of domestication, the taming of our wild souls through constant programming, can only exist in a dead world. The world that makes our existence possible is flattened, dissected and reassembled as a sum of all parts.

Our compliance is built upon an uprooted lack of place. We are aliens in our own home. Our virtues and pride are built around artificial replacements for community, for a sense of being, for a sense of belonging, and an amplified sense of self. Domestication is the process of stunting the growth and relationships that our hunter-gatherer minds and bodies require and redirecting those impulses to productivity. Our entire sense of identity is built upon *neotony*, an incomplete process of personal development within the greater community against a backdrop of living remembrance and myth.⁷ Psychologically speaking, we are runts.

Our senses are dulled, the instincts that we possess as children are subdued. Our world is flattened. As the anthropologist Colin Turnbull observed in comparing the stages of “the human cycle” between hunter-gatherers and Modernized consumers: “if in our childhood and adolescence we have not learned other modes of awareness, if we have not become fully integrated beings, and if we persist in dissociating reason from these other faculties, these other modes of knowing and understanding, then we remain fettered by the limitations of reason and cease to grow.”⁸

We absorb the fears of the farmer, politician, priest, and industrialist. We regurgitate them so that we can find some solace in their hollow promises. We build cities, countrysides, nuclear power plants, and open pit mines upon that foundation. We volunteer in the war against our own animality.

And all the while, these wild beings are constantly reminding, warning and telling us what our bodies and hearts know: we are connected. There is something here. A message lost as owl carcasses pile up on the sides of highways: we are born wild. And to our would-be messengers, we still are. We just aren’t recognizing it.

This is wildness. Yearning. Reaching. Crying out and carrying on.

And the blood of the messengers is on our hands.

Our perception of the world is fickle. Our subjective experiences can turn into self-sustaining feedback loops that only serve our own ideological biases. Biases crafted and sold to us by programmers, priests, and salespersons. But the world is more than that.

The world, to put it simply, exists.

⁶ John Livingston, *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation* in *The John A. Livingston Reader*. McClelland and Stewart: Toronto, 2007. Pg 89.

⁷ This is a point Paul Shepard did not miss. It is a common theme amongst his work, but most notable in *Nature and Madness*. Sierra Club Books: San Francisco, 1982.

⁸ Colin Turnbull, *The Human Cycle*. Simon and Schuster: New York, 1983. Pg 129.

Wildness exists.

It exists in its own right, comprised of billions upon billions of living beings. Physical separation may be real, but the stoic independence that the domesticated uphold is a fragment of our own fractured minds. A blinder: a limitation.

We look into a mirror of the isolated soul of a civilized being, a consumer of life, and subject the world to the distortions that we carry. We unload our burdens onto that barren soil, onto “nature”. It too must feel our loneliness, our isolation. Our wanting.

There is much to be said about the importance of critique. My short sell on anarcho-primitivism (AP) is that it is a critique with implications. And those implications are things that I don’t take lightly.

The AP critique is a short hand way of saying that civilization is killing the earth and that the domestication process is perpetually taking its toll on our lives in every sense of the word. Most importantly, the AP critique is saying that civilization, the culture of cities, doesn’t arrive out of thin air. There are roots here. To understand how we’ve gotten to this point, we must dig.

And so we dig.

The crisis we face is an old crisis, going back in some places nearly 12,000 years. That is literally to the beginning of History. In ecological time, that’s a drop in the bucket. Fortunately, as wild beings, our roots lie in ecological cycles, not linear time. Our roots go deep. Infinitely deep. We, human beings, are the slow outgrowth of millions of years of wild existence. It would be easy to regurgitate the narrative of Progress that our presence indicates a tooth-and-nail conquest of a world that is both Social Darwinian and Hobbesian in nature.

But we know this isn’t the case. Our development as a species has been relatively slow and stable. Our timeline for the antiquity of stone tools pushes back continually and is largely fogged by the inability to admire the ingenuity of our grounded ancestors and cousins. We *want* to believe that things have gotten better, that we have improved. Yet this isn’t true. All of the psychological and physical breakdowns of the human body and mind are an indicator that as adaptive as humans are, we can’t tolerate the domestication process and the reality it has created. This only becomes more increasingly apparent.

In short, the implication here is that we are not starting from scratch.

We are not born with the *Tabula Rasa*, the “clean slate”, that Plato and his predecessors had described. Philosophy, an indicator of our trained disconnect with the world around us, has always been a crucial tool of programmers and specialists alike. We are wild beings: each and every one of us. The AP critique is about understanding how changes in circumstance (specialization, surplus orientation, agriculture and pastoralism, sedentism; to name the primary culprits) created the vestiges of social power that have ultimately held our world, the wild community, hostage. Our mythos is cracking.

Human nature may historically have a lot of baggage, but from an ecological and biological perspective, it’s pretty impossible to dismiss. We are born hunter-gatherers, everything that domesticators have sought to impose is working against that basis. And they are failing as much now as they always have. “Wildness”, ecologist Paul Shepard was known to remind us, “is a genetic state.”⁹

Wildness is *our* genetic state.

⁹ Paul Shepard, *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*. Island Press: Washington DC, 1998. Pg 138.

The Nature of Language and Language of Nature

“Reification, the tendency to take the conceptual as the perceived and to treat concepts as tangible, is as basic to language as it is to ideology. Language represents the mind’s reification of its experience, that is, an analysis into parts which, as concepts, can be manipulated as if they were objects.”¹⁰

- John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*

Wildness is a complicated concept.

Its critics have conflated *wildness* with *Nature*, a move that obscures intentionality with conventional shorthand. From the very start, proponents of wildness have made a decisive choice in this language. What is being lost in the shuffle is that if you hold an ecological perspective, that the presence of wildness is hardly a means to supplant god/s, but indicative of the connections that we, as wild beings, share with the world. It’s an exploration of empathy, not an apathetic move to remain enthusiastic by-standers like conservationists.

The purpose isn’t to evoke wildness as an aesthetic, but as continuity, as our baseline: this is the ground that we are standing upon and it is worth defending. That the word is indefinable speaks to its complexity, it demands engagement.

So why use it?

There are many reasons not to use a word or to avoid naming altogether. Wildness, at least how I experience and conceptualize it, is sacred: that word is an indicator, not an encapsulation. That would be a good argument for leaving it even more obscure. But the problem then comes down to intentions. If I want to discuss civilization with anyone, this is my baseline, my reference point: wildness is the attainable and lurking reminder that we were not meant to live civilized lives.

Wildness, as the term is often used, transcends space and time: unlike *wilderness* it is not a place and unlike *nature* it is not external. Wildness is reflective of a continuum. Sure enough, hippies and New Agers may have tried touching on it and self-help gurus might delve into the term,¹¹ but there’s a degree of inescapability to that. Words travel. As recent attempts to completely own and market *rewilding* have highlighted, you can’t control the usage, but you can contribute to the context.

That is not a minor point. Anthropologist Hugh Brody saw it as a more practical observation in terms of the age old question as to whether language shapes the mind or mind shapes language: “a person can explain how a word is used and what it refers to, but the word’s *meaning* depends on knowing a web of contexts and concealed related meanings.”¹²

That the term *wildness* can be written off isn’t an indication of how the word itself is reification, our abstract representation, because all words are arguably reifications. The difference is in the *context*. Should wildness be defined and corralled into a trap of stagnancy, then the context, that

¹⁰ John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal* (2nd Edition). CAL Press: Columbia, MO, 1999. Pg 34.

¹¹ Radicals are not to be dismissed from this as well. The prime example being Derrick Jensen who tried appropriating the “language older than words” as he believed indigenous peoples have reiterated it. This, however, ends tragically after he began calling himself Tecumseh, talking about domestic animals offering their bodies to his axe, having his dogs eat feces from his source, or having sex with trees. Needless to say, his “conversations” with nature, lacking in any and all humility, bare little resemblance to those reiterated otherwise here.

¹² Hugh Brody, *The Other Side of Eden*. North Point Press: New York, 2000. Pg 47.

flowing, organic, struggling and ever-presence that defies reflection, would be another matter altogether.

Like domestication, it's easier to know it when you see it.

The problem is that we aren't seeing it.

Ecologist David Abram in his landmark book on perception, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, echoes a trajectory of philosophy in pointing out that: "the perceptual style of any community is both reflected in, and profoundly shaped by, the common language of the community." For our rooted hunting and gathering relatives, that language includes "the speech of birds, of wolves, and even of the wind". Contrast that against the world of the civilized, the world we've all been raised in, where "we now experience language as an exclusively human property or possession".¹³

For all of our narcissistic obsessions with technological development, we have completely disregarded that the counterpoint to the self-applied badge of Progress is our increased our dependency upon stimulation overload on one side and complete sensory depravation on the rest.¹⁴ Building upon civilization's foundation of hierarchy and complacency, we externalize our frustrations to (and often beyond) the point of self-destruction. I'll allow an anthropologist to state it lightly:

"if our species really did evolve in the context of social relationships approximating those in current immediate-return societies, then our current delayed-return societies may be requiring us to behave in ways that are discordant with our natural tendencies"¹⁵

Put bluntly: removed of our own wild context, we are out of balance.

Nature, the bandage we apply on the externalized wild world that we are actively destroying, is our counterpoint. It is our Other.¹⁶ "Nature" as sociologist Peter Dwyer aptly points out, "is an invention, an artifact."¹⁷ Not one to mince words, anthropologist Tim Ingold gets down to it: "the world can only be 'nature' for a being that does not belong there".¹⁸ As we will elaborate, this is yet another civilized disease which hunter-gatherers have not suffered:

"[Hunter-gatherers] do not see themselves as mindful subjects having to contend with an alien world of physical objects; indeed, the separation of mind and nature has no place in their thought and practice."¹⁹

The obedience required by the domesticated demands a world of binary dualisms: of innately oppositional forces. In turn, it created those dichotomies. Nature versus civilization, wild versus

¹³ David Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*. Vintage: New York, 1997. Pg 91.

¹⁴ For more on this see my essay "The Suffocating Void" in *Black and Green Review number 1*. Black and Green Press: Ephrata, PA, 2015.

¹⁵ Leonard Martin and Steven Shirk, "Immediate-Return Societies: What Can They Tell Us About the Self and Social Relationships in Our Society" in Wood, Tesser, and Holmes (eds), *The Self and Social Relationships*. Psychology Press: New York, 2008. Pg 178.

¹⁶ For more on this subject, see my essay "Egocide" in Kevin Tucker, *For Wildness and Anarchy*. Black and Green Press: Greensburg, PA, 2009. Also pretty widely available online.

¹⁷ Peter Dwyer, "The Invention of Nature" in Ellen and Fukui (eds), *Redefining Nature: Ecology, Culture and Domestication*. Berg: Oxford, 1996. Pg 157.

¹⁸ Tim Ingold, "Hunting and Gathering as Ways of Perceiving the Environment" in Ellen and Fukui, 1996. Pg 117.

¹⁹ Ibid, pg 120.

domesticated, developed versus undeveloped: there are many iterations of an increasingly antagonized division between the individual and the world that surrounds them. We can say this is a problem of linguistics, we can use philosophy and theory to try to perfect the language and have an asterisk on every word we utter, but none of this escapes the fact that the *reality* domestication has created is one of binary opposition.

Civilization doesn't just oppose nature; it created it so that it could stand against it. This is what we have conquered. This is what we have crawled out from to stand on our feet with pride.

Wildness vs Wilderness

"The idea of wilderness, both as a realm of purification outside civilization and as a special place with beneficial qualities, has strong antecedents in the High Culture of the Western world. The ideas that wilderness offers us solace, naturalness, nearness to a kind of literary, spiritual esthetic, or to unspecified metaphysical forces, escape from urban stench, access to ruminative solitude, and locus of test, trial, and special visions—all of these extend prior traditions. True, wilderness is something we can escape to, a departure into a kind of therapeutic land or sea, release from our crowded and overbuilt environment, healing to those who sense the presence of the disease of tameness. We think of wilderness as a place, a vast uninhabited home of wild things. It is also another kind of place. It is that genetic aspect of ourselves that spatially occupies every body and every cell."²⁰

<>-²¹ Furthermore, this enacted knowledge "is generally holistic, and not easily subject to fragmentation. To deconstruct it and arrange its features in analytic categories, and then to discuss them cross-culturally, is to Westernize them."²²

Much of what can be said of wildness in defiance of nature echoes into the discussion about *wilderness*.

Following up on his observations about wildness as a "genetic state", Paul Shepard contrasts wilderness as the place we have dedicated for wildness to exist. An extolling of demons, a soothing of lingering desires: the playground and museum to engage our senses through voyeurism. But the cost of entry here isn't just complacency, it's far more malicious. The narrative offered is a reiteration of our distancing, but the trip is courtesy of your local tour agent: our leisure is another purchase.

In Shepard's words: "Wilderness sanctuaries presuppose our acceptance of the corporate takeover of everything else. Privatizing is celebrated as part of the ideal of the politics of the state, masked as individualism and freedom."²³ The experience of wilderness is far from an expression of wildness. The terms may only differ by a mere two letters, but the implications couldn't be greater.

That adventures in wilderness have become a basis for actual dispossession and displacement for those hunter-gatherers, who lacked a context for *nature* as a removed place, is no coincidence. Exemplifying the point, the Hadza of Tanzania were threatened with forced removal from

²⁰ Shepard, 1998. Pg 132.

²¹ Catherine Fowler and Nancy Turner, "Ecological/cosmological knowledge and land management among hunter-gatherers" in Lee and Daly, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*. Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 1999. Pg 421.

²² Ibid, 419.

²³ Shepard, 1998. Pg 138.

ancestral lands by a hunting safari company based out of the United Arab Emirates.²⁴ A fate that resonates amongst the !Kung of Botswana and Namibia who are arrested for poaching and trespass within reserves that bear their names.²⁵

These are stories that repeat and play out constantly throughout history, which is since civilized people began recording time instead of living within it. These are the footnotes to the autobiographical legacy of colonizers and conquerors. While we have been ingrained with their perceptions and narratives, they still must constantly be positioned to work against our own wild state: the hunter-gatherer inside your mind, your being.

To awaken those senses, it is helpful to understand how those rooted peoples see their world. *Our world.*

Perception and the Living Earth

“I was born in the forest. My forefathers came from here. We are the Wanniyala-aetto and I want to live and die here. Even if I were to be reborn as only a fly or as an ant, I would still be happy as long as I knew I would come back to live here in the forest.”²⁶

- Kotabakinne (Veddah) chief, Uru Warige Tissahamy.

The abolition of *nature* is not an uncommon theme amongst post-modern philosophers. Their impulse is born of Modernity and interacts with the world as they have been trained to see it. They are correct in their assessments that the world is constantly in flux and that stagnancy stands in the way, but they continue on the legacy of the ungrounded, the uprooted. Their sense of entitlement to a present without bounds neglects the consequence of the world as we know it: the world where our actions impact life across the planet and beyond our generation.

They carry on without context.

To see the past, present and future as evident in all life is an ability that we should have, but that perception comes only with living in a way that is not detrimental towards the past, present and future. Rooted indigenous societies have notoriously lacked any sense of linear time. Like *nature*, they lack the separation necessary to create it.

In living with the hunter-gatherer Pirahã of Brazil, missionary turned agnostic Daniel Everett observed that the inability to “spread the word” was attributed in part to the fact that Pirahã “only make statements that are anchored to the moment when they are speaking, rather than to any other point in time.”²⁷ Their world lacked a need to speak in historic terms and, subsequently, their language lacks anything beyond a simple form of tense.

A world without presence was unthinkable.

That is the world in which wildness runs rampant. It is the place where language has never been solely attributed to humans. This is the place where the messages of animals, plants, and weather are taken at face value and understood. The ability to read the language of birds is a given. The

²⁴ Survival International, “Safari concession threatens Hadza tribe”, June 28, 2007. Online: <http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/2467>. Accessed July 8, 2015.

²⁵ See Rupert Isaacson, *The Healing Land*. Grove Press: New York, 2001.

²⁶ Cited in Lee and Daly, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*. Cambridge UP: Cambridge, 1999. Pg 271.

²⁷ Daniel Everett, *Don't Sleep, There are Snakes*. Pantheon Books: New York, 2008. Pg 132.

ability to read bodies and movement are not separated from the definitiveness that we attribute only to speech. This isn't the world beyond nature; it is the world where it is unnecessary.

The connectivity that New Agers and their ilk have sought to be proponents of is a by-product of our own limits to perception. Our glass is fogged over. Those connections are within reach, but we have to be prepared for the humility of breaking down the domesticator in our minds.

For the hunter-gatherer, no such obstructions exist until they have been forced upon them. Their perception minces no words on the matter of matter. In the words of Ilarion Merculieff, an Aluet native, speaking of the world of the hunter-gatherer;

"Theirs is a world in which the interdependence of humans, animals, plants, water, and earth – the total picture – is always immediate, always present. And the total picture – every day, every season, every year – is seen as a circle. Everything is connected: the marshlands to the beaver, the beaver dams to altered conditions, the new conditions to the moose herd, the moose herd to the marshlands. Each affects the other, and it is in this intimate knowledge of the environment (all the curves in the circle) that has allowed these people to survive for hundreds of generations."²⁸

The ability to externalize "the Other" is demolished through proximity and familiarity. Anthropologist William Laughlin observes a common theme amongst the development of children in hunter-gatherer societies: the passing on of the world of the hunter as a trade in and of itself. The wholeness of climate, growth patterns, migration movements, the knowledge of track, sign and bird language, the detailed knowledge of anatomy that comes from butchering and stalking; all of these elements are integral to life in the wild.

This is not particular to humans, but in using language to reflect upon it, Laughlin observes: "Their conversations often sound like a classroom discussion of ecology, of food chains, and trophic levels."²⁹ This is not lost on the children, whose growing knowledge of animals is "prominently based upon familiarity with animal behavior and includes ways of living peacefully with animals, of maintaining a discourse with them".³⁰

Philosophy is not an adequate replacement for proximity without separation. Wildness here needs no interpretation, but is often subject to exaltation. "I suggest", observes Mathias Guenther of the timeless rock art of the !Kung, "that animals are beguiling and interesting to man *prima facie*, in and of themselves, without any mediation through social structure."³¹

The relationships in question bare more resemblance to symbiosis than the symbolic. The case of the Honey Guide bird in the Kalahari is one oft-cited example. The Honey Guide leads a more physically able being towards beehives to harvest honey. It matters not if that being is a human or a honey badger so long as the harvester sets honeycomb aside for the willing and patient guide.³²

²⁸ Ilarion Merculieff, "Weston Society's Linear Systems and Aboriginal Cultures: The Need for Two-Way Exchanges for the Sake of Survival" in Burch and Ellanna, *Key Issues in Hunter-Gatherer Research*. Berg: Oxford, 1994. Pg 409.

²⁹ William Laughlin "Hunting: An Integrating Biobehavior System and Its Evolutionary Importance" in Lee and Devore (eds), *Man the Hunter*. Aldine De Gruyter: New York, 1968. Pg 314.

³⁰ Ibid, pg 305.

³¹ Mathias Guenther, "Animals in Bushman Thought, Myth and Art" in Ingold, Riches, and Woodburn, *Hunters and Gatherers Volume 2: Property, Power and Ideology*. Berg: Oxford, 1988. Pg 202.

³² Just one great reason to look into Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Old Way*. Sarah Crichton Books: New York,

And yet the language of wildness here maintains a circumstantial definition. Little more is needed.

The participants in this world need no terminology and, in light of solid context, the terms may be translated into a placeless language like English, but without having relative experiences, the meaning is lost. I feel the weight of the words used by the Mbuti, whom Colin Turnbull lived amongst, as they spoke of *ndura* or “forestness” represented by the symbols of fire, water, air and earth, which they “cannot move, eat, or breathe without being conscious of one or all of these symbols, and all are treated with respect, consciously recognized as integral parts of the ultimate giver of life, the forest.”³³ What resonates further within me is that the wind is upheld as *pepo nde ndura*, or, “the breath of the forest itself.”³⁴ Amongst the Nayaka of southern India, the forest is similarly referred to as “the giving environment”.³⁵

It is important to note that while my emphasis so far has been on animals, the same notions and connections extend to plants themselves. They too can serve both as messengers and healers. Herbalist and natural veterinarian Dr. Randy Kidd shares a story of having attempted to grow mullein in his own rock garden to no avail. He decided to ask his neighbor about the beautiful stalks of it growing in their yard. The neighbors had paid little to no attention to the sage-like green stalks and their tiny yellow flowers protruding amongst the rocks, but they happened to mention that one of the residents was currently hospitalized for asthma – a disease which mullein is known to treat.³⁶

Our ability to forget that our connections extend beyond other animals has led equally to the facilitation and “the loss of plant species, the loss of health in ecosystems and our bodies, and the loss of the sense of who we ourselves, are.”³⁷

The tragedy that we face arises both from our distancing from that timeless world and the ways in which our rooted hunter-gatherer minds are physically incapable of thinking on a global scale.³⁸

We are trapped by circumstance.

Our escape demands a realization of the world as it has been and will be, but remains hindered by the obstructions, the sheer physicality and devastation that civilization has created. The urge is there to delve completely into the world of the hunter-gatherer, a place both rooted and unbound. It is the place where we belong and it lurks within us and struggles to stand its ground on the periphery. But ignorance is not our path there.

Empathy is.

By seeking to immerse ourselves in the wildness that surrounds us, we can’t expect the spiritual salvation offered by Gurus on weekend retreats. This place is sacred, but it is not a safe place. It is under assault. As are we. As are all living beings.

It is through connection, through grounding, that we understand what is at stake, what is lost and forgotten, buried and removed. When we begin to prod our constant process of pains

2006. Pg 167.

³³ Colin Turnbull, *The Human Cycle*. Simon and Schuster: New York, 1983. Pgs 50-51.

³⁴ Colin Turnbull, *Wayward Servants*. Natural History Press: New York, 1965. Pg 249.

³⁵ Nurit Bird-David, “The Giving Environment: Another Perspective on the Economic System of Gatherer-Hunters”. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 1990), pgs 189-196.

³⁶ Randy Kidd, DVM, *Dr. Kidd’s Guide to Herbal Dog Care*. Storey: Pownal, VT, 2000. Pg 32.

³⁷ Stephen Harrod Buhner, *The Lost Language of Plants*. Chelsea Green: White River Junction, VT, 2002. Pg 229.

³⁸ For more discussion of this, see “Everywhere and Nowhere” in Tucker, 2009.

inflicted upon our being, when the Self and Other fade, when we identify that source of agony: only then will we fight with passion and meaning for what is *known*.

Wild Existence, Passionate Resistance

“An-archic and pantheistic dancers no longer sense the artifice and its linear His-Story as All, but merely one cycle, one long night, a stormy night that left Earth wounded, but a night that ends, as all nights end, when the sun rises.”³⁹

- Fredy Perlman, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*.

The term *rewilding* has had its share of false Gurus and snake oil salespersons attempting to derail the process and turn it into consumable fodder.⁴⁰ False hopes and rewilding “Ninja Camps”⁴¹ aside, the rewilding process, like the anarcho-primitivist critique, carries with it an innate understanding of human nature as rooted in nomadic hunter-gatherer life. To *re-wild* is to acknowledge that wildness is our baseline.

Rewilding, to put it simply, is about stopping and *undoing* the separation created through the domestication process. As programs may try to sway towards a singular emphasis on primal skills or may tiptoe around with the voyeuristic tourism of a hiker, this underlying principle remains. As the consequences of domestication continue to unfold and assault the world we live in, the radicalism of that sentiment stands.

What separates rewilding from any other form of naturalist and ecophilosophical inquiry is that the end point is integration. The path overlaps in terms of observation, but the “leave only footprints” Nature fan has no interest in undoing the dichotomy that civilization requires. Their quest is one of indulgence, not subsistence and substance. It is akin to meditation.

To embrace the wild, we have to undergo the process of allowing wildness to help us evaluate our baggage. To remove our separation requires a transformation of thought that erodes the scientific taxonomy that seeks to understand the world through a microscope. As naturalist Jon Young points out, native knowledge and scientific knowledge are “two ways of paying supremely close attention.”⁴² Native knowledge, or “science without all of the trappings”, is riddled with empathy, itself “a dangerous word in science” as it stands in complete opposition to the necessary removal implicit in the intent cloak of objectivity.⁴³ Young argues that his primary focuses, bird language/communication and tracking, rooted at first in observation inevitably lead those who take the time to “not just show up, but really tune in”, to build relationships and experience the community of wildness on its own terms will experience what can only be called a primal awakening.⁴⁴

That is a spiritual awakening.

³⁹ Fredy Perlman, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1983. Pg 302.

⁴⁰ See Four Legged Human, “The Commodification of Wildness and Its Consequences” in *Black and Green Review* no 1, spring 2015.

⁴¹ This joke is sadly true. Brought to you by the douche bags of “ReWild University” at rewildu.com.

⁴² Jon Young, *What the Robin Knows*. Mariner Books: Boston, 2012. Pg xxi.

⁴³ Ibid, Pg xxvi.

⁴⁴ Ibid, Pg xxviii. This point is really driven home in his excellent 8 CD set with the underwhelming title of *Advanced Bird Language*. I can’t recommend it enough to reiterate and elaborate points I’ve made throughout this essay.

Echoed by tracking instructor Paul Rezendes, what I call the “radical humility” of having your ass handed to you by the wild in terms of thought and physicality is no easy process. As having been raised with the redirected impulses of a wild being towards consumable traits, we have much work to do. It is only “when the self becomes tired and weak and pride languishes can the awareness that is wildness step in.”⁴⁵

The salvaging of scientifically understood connections through biology, ecology, psychology, as well as anthropology and sociology, requires a difference in perception. That the methods used to gain knowledge are flawed doesn’t change that they can still glean elements of reality; they just took the long way there. The pride of achievement domestication awards us can quickly fade in light of, as Young states, “what the robin already knows.”

The teachings of the robin are not far off from those of our hunter-gatherer relatives. They remind us of the timeless place where history is lived rather than charted. “Both humans and non-humans, in short,” Tim Ingold observes, “figure as fellow-participants in an ongoing process of remembering.”⁴⁶ Wildness is within us. Wildness surrounds us. It suffers alongside and through us, its wounds still being inflicted.

Yet it does not give up.

No amount of concrete, steel, ideology, or distancing has succeeded in its conquest. None will. Civilization measures its victories in temporal measures that within a historic timeline appear significant. Removed of linear time, removed of our forgetting, our disconnect, their significance wanes into collections of dusty books and obsolete technology.

Civilization is both a complex and volatile target. Its ideology and mechanics are built upon regurgitated narratives built upon the false belief that our future, as humans, will take us from the dreaded earth. That our history will show a gruesome conquest of animality, ours included, moving from the reflection of gods to a god status.

And yet each of us, every single one of us, is falling apart along the way.

We are testaments to the failures of domestication. Our bodies, built to withstand the extremes of climate, movement, famine and feast, succumb to diseases of the sedentary, the undernourished, the overfed, the toxins, and the meaningless wanderings. Blind to the catastrophe unfolding through us, we miss the connectivity hiding in plain sight: the wildness creeping through the cracks. Turnbull, contrasting the emptiness of civilization against the grounded life exhibited amongst the Mbuti, noted that having “never learned to employ our whole being as a tool of awareness” has kept us from “that essence of life which cannot be learned except through direct awareness, which is total, not merely rational.” Encounters with the Spirit, the wildness, in “our form of social organization merely allows it to happen as an accident, if at all, whereas the Mbuti writes it into the charter from the outset, at conception.”⁴⁷

The structure of Mbuti life embraces the *pepo nde ndura*, the breath of the forest, whereas the structure of our world is built around avoiding or diverting it at all costs. If another way of being were seen as possible, the sanctity of the Freedom to Consume would fade. The burden of work would collapse.

And it is through the reconnection with the wild, through the erosion of our stagnant sense of removal, that the weaknesses of civilization become apparent. The struggle of the wild becomes

⁴⁵ Paul Rezendes, *The Wild Within*. Berkeley Books: New York, 1999. Pg 204.

⁴⁶ Tim Ingold, ‘Time, Memory, and Property’ in Widlok and Tadesse, *Property and Equality Volume 1: Ritualisation, Sharing, Egalitarianism*. Berghahn: New York, 2007. Pg 166.

⁴⁷ Turnbull, 1983. Pg 77.

real. The impact of climate instability and ecological devastation become our battle cry. The exacerbated feedback loops of drought and flood, the fires of thirsty and embattled forests ignite our animalistic urges.

When we remove the distance between the destruction of the earth and bear the scars of wildness, we will know not only what the robin has told us, but what our indigenous and lost relatives and ancestors have told us: when you know what it means to be wild, you will know what it means to fight.

To struggle.

To resist.

Around the time that I began to acknowledge the messages I had been getting from wild messengers, I began to push myself further into the woods. I tried to escape the sounds of the designed world. But valleys carried the echo of distant engines. Power lines and radio towers carried the news of conquest.

There was much to be found in those forests, but perhaps what I found the most was within myself. I had much to learn. I have much to learn. As my love and empathy grew, my rage burned deeper. The sheer simplicity of symbiosis tears at my soul. How many messages had I missed? Why, in light of my own complicity with ecocide, were the wild ones willing to recognize me, a descendent of colonizers walking on stolen land?

But it wasn't me they were after.

Just as hunter-gatherers lack a conceptual basis for nature or wilderness, the wild lacks the framework for vengeance. The language of birds will immediately ring the alarm over our indifferent, yet aloof demeanor whether we chose to recognize that or not. Their communication has nothing to hide and they share their trepidations widely. Hunter-gatherers and anyone willing to acknowledge this can act accordingly. Strange though our behaviors might be, the birds recognize what we have been trained not to see: the wildness that we carry in our being.

We belong here.

Their songs, their alarms, these messages; all of these are an unquestioned part of their world. Of our world.

And they await our return.

I often wish that Nature was real. That vengeance was within her. That she would undo civilization. No doubt she possesses the might. But it doesn't work that way: the sheer weight of inevitability errs on her side, yet I am left with nothing to transpose my own helplessness onto. There is no escape.

Wild beings under attack simply respond. They bite. They claw. They tear. It is instinctual and instant, not prolonged and devoid of responsibility. Our playing field is not level. Planners and programmers play chess with our fates. The potential of our own demise is the footnote to blueprints for a Future that will never come on a planet that was never meant to support it.

There is no easy salvation here. Wildness is not a retreat.

When we overcome our rational minds and embrace it in our souls, we will do as our wild relatives, human and nonhuman, have done: stand our ground.

Bite, claw, and tear.

And we will fight until the wound is no longer inflicted.

The power of the known, the meaning of context, the power of wildness lies in their ambiguity. The inability to define wildness attests to its enduring strength. It refuses constraint.

You will simply know it when you feel it.

And I can think of no greater end to aspire to.

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To Speak of Wildness
October 2015

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To The Captives

A Declaration of War and Words

Kevin Tucker

2019

Contents

Anarchism versus Anarchy	5
Future? Primitive?	8
Re-wild, Resist.	11

No one, it is said, can go back to the Pleistocene. We will not, in some magic time warp that denies duration, join those prehistoric dead in their well-honed ecology. But that is irrelevant. Having never left our genome and its authority, we have never left the past, which is part of ourselves, and have only to bring the Pleistocene to us.

-Paul Shepard, *Traces of an Omnivore*¹

Semantics can be painful, but sometimes a little goes a long way.

For nearly the past two decades, I have loudly called myself an anarcho-primitivist. I've found both grounding and a place within anarcho-primitivism. It's helped define a place to learn and fight from. But, like all things, it's important to realize limitations as well. Is this new ground, or are we still on enemy turf?

As one of anarcho-primitivism's primary proponents, it's a fairly comfortable backdrop for me to offer as shorthand: that there's more to what I'm saying than what is in any one essay or talk. Anarcho-primitivism is my context. But there are a number of drawbacks that continually come up. So let me say this clearly: I am an anarcho-primitivist. I have no issue with what we have built up and continue to build upon. I will always be an anarcho-primitivist.

The problem isn't the critique. The problem, to the extent there is one, is in the name and its framing: anarcho-primitivism.

This is a conversation that has been growing for a while. John Zerzan and I have privately and publicly discussed the relationship of anarcho-primitivism to anarchism more widely. It's been a part of internal discussions among *Wild Resistance* editors, as well as others. It's felt increasingly apparent that the name is a limitation, attaching itself to two different lineages—archism and primitivism—neither of which is necessarily fitting in its own right. Anarcho-primitivism becomes the square peg, tethered to sets of rules that are neither applicable nor useful.

I've increasingly used another phrase: *primal anarchy*. As both anarchism and primitivism seem to quickly wither and decay on their own, I'm only finding more reasons to embrace that term entirely.

We are all stuck in a strange predicament.

Until the past 10,000 years or so of our history, little about the world drastically changed until civilization began to alter it. Since the technology capable of disrupting the feedback loops of a wild world arose. Since the organization of labor fostered the domestication of plants and animals, turning the communal spaces into churches, and the introduction of draft animals only for them to become replaced by the combine, there has been a massive disruption to the way that we, as social animals, have engaged the world. Whatever we throw at it, however we dam and damn it, this is the very same earth that fostered our evolution, our development. It allowed us to thrive. And we thrived within it.

In return, we subjugate and assault it.

We develop technologies to become more efficient at that assault. We continually become more proficient in our attempts to suffocate the world that we remain a part of.

All of this comes in stages and steps. In great leaps forward. In wars and peace. From the vantage point of the supposed victor, the self-appointed hero records a trajectory. Our rise. Our history.

¹ Paul Shepard, *Traces of an Omnivore*. Washington DC: Shearwater, 1996. Pg 220.

At every step, we award ourselves the ingenuity of conquest. We document it. Our achievements. Our first boom, our last burst. It's all in there, we wear our colonial past and present in globally sourced and produced articles of clothing, bought and sold on a world market through machines and shanty factories. It's at our table. It's the beds we seek solace in at night. Buried in plain sight, the lineage of civilization lies before us.

If you dig, it falls apart. It becomes increasingly apparent. It becomes impossible to escape.

It is the predicament of our world, that it is easier to explain that past, to expand our present back and then into the future, both far and wide, than it is to understand the answer to the simplest of questions: why? Why do we go to work? Why do we consume? Why do we defend our abuser?

Why do we seek to salvage the corpse of a system that brings more misery than joy?

One that brings more content than grounding? More fiber optic cables than connections?

Those questions are like plagues: why do we continue to play along and take part in a system that ultimately could destroy us and our home? Why are we more comfortable with catastrophic annihilation than the minor discomforts that a machine-free world might bring?

There is a foundation to this world; infrastructure, economic systems, systemic distancing and oppression, individual trauma and collective dispossession are all at its core. When you chart the history of civilization, all of those things come to the front. But they are drivers. As social animals, we need more than that. We need a story. We need a reason or a justification for why we do what we do.

Narratives don't conquer, but narratives enlist troops, miners, loggers, and missionaries. In limiting our perception of the world, a solid story is sales pitch for a life that we didn't ask for and a sacrifice we didn't seek to make. Narratives shape the questions we ask and the answers we are willing to hear in return.

As the world becomes both more literate and literal, both the stories we tell and the terms we use continue to gain more and more power. They become our baseline. They set the parameters.

The words we use, the frameworks we exist within, matter. They flatten the world and our interactions with it. They keep us looking anywhere but down to the earth where grounding is possible. Keep on dreaming, keep on working.

It's not satisfying to say, but to condense the questions above into one: why do we actively take part in perpetuating a way of existence that is unfulfilling and omniscial? It's because we've stopped seeing it as an option. Our training pays off and we no longer see it as a choice. We no longer see that the entire trajectory we are on has more bodies behind it than futures ahead.

The words matter because this world matters.

If you feel no more satisfied than I do with this, then we better start finding ways of telling a new story. And it helps to know that older stories are still here. Buried close to the surface hastily by conquistadors and developers, they're tied to the earth we've been led to believe has long since been subjugated. Conquered. Repopulated. Repurposed.

We are led to believe that we arrived here by choice. That we are free, acting on free will.

That we are anything but captives.

Everything we interact with seeks to reinforce that perception, but it is a veneer. A house of cards. A palace of glass and mirrors. Within it, we have rocks and we have Molotovs at our disposal, but it helps to know what we're up against. And to do so, we have to be able to see it more clearly. Choose our words cautiously, so we can react fiercely. We can once again be-

come grounded in the world that exists, rather than remain stuck with the divided, mapped, and claimed reality that we were born into.

We have the chance to realize that we were never really gone in the first place.

Anarchism versus Anarchy

The only -ist name I respond to is “cellist.”

-Fredy Perlman²

Let's start with anarchism.

Anarchy is a relatively simple term. From the Greek, *An-* and *-arkhos*: without a chief or ruler. It's proscriptive and open to interpretation pretty widely. The various sects of anarchism split over a central question: what constitutes government? What constitutes social control? At the very least, anarchists all agree that government is an impediment to freedom.

Ultimately, that isn't necessarily saying a lot.

The problem is that anarchism is largely reactive in nature. It's left focusing most often on what *a particular society* might look like without government, when there is a focus at all. In a sense, that's not a bad starting point, but it is limiting.

For anarcho-primitivists, simply being against government has never been enough. The subjugation implicit in social power presses beyond humans. The war against the wild started long before the first smokestack ever went up. Industrial strength domination just sped up the process and efficiency of draining the earth to fuel itself. This is a realization shared widely amongst all green anarchists.

Among green or eco-anarchists, it was no longer just about the State, but state-level societies: civilization itself.³ Bio-centrism took a central role, but even anti-civilization anarchism has taken on a life of its own, having its nihilist and egoist sides being against “wildness” and “nature,” alongside civilization. It's not uncommon for those particular anti-civilization anarchists to call themselves “green anarchists,” but the “green” aspect is merely incidental.

It is anarcho-primitivism that has driven green anarchism. And this continues to be the case. Anarcho-primitivism is concerned, first and foremost, with not just opposing civilization, but in digging up its roots. While other sects of anarchism have sought to oppose or theorize about what functional anarchist societies might look like, anarcho-primitivists dug into history, ecology, anthropology, and our experiences and actually found them: nomadic hunter-gatherers. Those that have lived a mobile life, hunting, foraging, and scavenging, refusing to store foods; here we have it, anarchy in action.

This isn't the anarchy that most anarchists have dreamt up. Mostly you hear about modern communes, communal living situations, or cooperative ventures. Short-lived stuff, but always stuck on being relatively compatible with a modern, civilized life. Romantic, revolutionary anarchists can be indiscernible from their socialist affiliates on the Left and their libertarian affiliates on the Right. “All the movements of the left and right,” wrote Jacques Camatte in 1973, “are func-

² Cited in Lorraine Perlman, *Having Little, Being Much*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1989. Pg 96.

³ This wasn't always the case, “green State” social ecologists used to be under the umbrella of “green anarchism,” but that seemed to have definitively faded by the time the *Green Anarchy* editorial collective added “anti-civilization” to its masthead (no 9, summer 2002).

tionally the same inasmuch as they all participate in a larger, more general movement towards the destruction of the human species.”⁴ In their view, anarchism is an ideal. One worth fighting for, but mostly one that will be proven true after the Revolution is won.

And herein lies a central conflict: ideals are meaningless.

Those instances of “anarchy” are unstable, fallible beasts. When they fail, as they always have and will, it will be said that it was because they weren’t enacted properly. Or the individuals faltered. Anything other than being a flawed dream of industrial and post-industrial philosophers and activists, dead set on tackling only the oppression most directly in front of them.

What the anarcho-primitivist critique came down to is something that one of anarchism’s founding voices, Kropotkin, also saw: hunter-gatherers live in a state of anarchy.⁵ He was overly optimistic in pulling that thread, rightfully seeing that anarchy hadn’t been fully suppressed by horticultural societies, but then mistaking currents of *anarchy-as-resistance* with the potential for *anarchism-as-ideal* to continue existing in the fields, factories, and workshops. The path for anarchy diverged from reality to ideal.

Anarcho-primitivism, however, found it again.

Social control was no longer just the object of States, but made possible by domestication. Our baseline as a species became more apparent: 99.999% of our time on Earth was shaped by and for life as nomadic hunter-gatherer-scavengers. The most egalitarian societies ever to have existed—where social power in all its forms (patriarchy, tribe-based, and otherwise) were not only absent, but also impossible—function not because of planning, but because of practices.

Unlike ideals, there was no need for perfection. There’s nothing innately better about individuals in a hunter-gatherer society, their societies work because they remove all the premises of domesticated life. When you remove production, you remove the need for exclusive rights and access. When everyone is capable and a participant in acquiring food (rather than producing it), there’s nothing to wield over others or coerce with. When tensions rise, you can just walk away.

This is primal anarchy: a holistically functioning, resilient, and egalitarian society that is innately and ecologically sane. The anthropologist Peter Gardner has called it “pure anarchy.”⁶ It has often been conflated with “primitive communism,” but when there is no surplus there is no production. With no production and no articulated tribal identity, it’s hard to find a means of production for a non-existent, yet well-defined, society to communally own.

You’d think the anarchists would rejoice, but, again, the ideal won. Anarchists were already in too deep, having constructed a hypothetical situation where civilization wasn’t only desirable, but magically tenable. In the minds of the romantics, unshaken by both history and ecology, to break the course of Progress is heresy.

All the arguments come out; anarcho-primitivists romanticize hunter-gatherers. We can’t turn back the clock. Genie is out of the bottle. Civilization is what *everyone* wants. It goes on and on. Anarchism, for anarchists, is seemingly superior to anarchy.

Likewise, one thing was horribly apparent: primal anarchy, where it exists, is profoundly lacking in anarchists. It doesn’t need idealists and visionaries to exist. It’s not planned and articulated, but actualized. As an anarchist, that’s exciting. But it’s also telling: we are anarchists because of

⁴ Jacques Camatte, *This World We Must Leave and Other Essays*. New York: Autonomedia, 1995. Pg 95.

⁵ Speaking specifically of Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*. Boston: Extending Horizons, undated [1902].

⁶ Peter Gardner, ‘Studying Pure Anarchists.’ Lecture, CHAGS: Twelfth Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies. Penang, Malaysia. 2018.

what we oppose. In some cases, because of what we strive for. Individual flavors of anarchism remain the ideals that determine goals and targets.

Primal anarchy isn't content with that. Our bodies, minds, and the ways we relate with the world were forged within context. It's not just what we think, but how we see, how our bodies move, the way our nerves react to impulses, and the nagging refusals of domestication that have spurred anarchism and resistance to all forms of control, past, present, and future.

Primal anarchy isn't an ideal: it is our context.

This may sound semantic, but it is a significant shift. We aren't disempowered agents: we are captives of civilization, of domestication. We aren't yearning to find freedom, we yearn to express it and live within it. It is here, with us, now. It is both within and surrounding us.

A common critique of anarcho-primitivism is that we have drawn lines around nomadic hunter-gatherers. That any other society, no matter how close or far it is to hunter-gatherer life, has simply crossed the line. To some, it separates the work that anarcho-primitivism has produced from that of anarchist anthropologists like Pierre Clastres and James Scott, who have focused on anarchism in horticultural and agrarian societies as a resistance to power in "societies against the State."⁷

By taking primal anarchy as our baseline, those lines are gone. Vanished. To anarchists, we've just narrowed the ideal. But this is a complete recontextualization of our history and present, one that favors anarchy over anarchism. Primal anarchy closes the gap: anarchy is our nature. It is our natural state: we don't just want egalitarianism or, as State-level societies mirror it, equality, we want wild communities built on freedom of movement and subsistence.

Every State, every civilization, has had to face that resistance.

Domesticators, politicians, priests, and programmers know this better than anarchists. Those pulling the reins aren't smart enough to completely fabricate wants and needs, it's far easier and more effective for them to tear apart the innate needs and wants that we have as social animals, repackage them and have us work for them piecemeal.

They tell us that we chose to leave our "primitive" life in the hopes of having more. They know that if they remove our context, we'll take part in the unending search for meaning. They know that if we can't forage, then we'll plant. If planting is taken from us, we'll work for food.

Anarchists accept this. Anarchy refuses it. That is why we fight. That is why the entirety of civilization is a litany of struggles led by those who quit working, sat on the front lines, smashed police barricades, took the lives of capitalists and politicians, and burned the machinery of Progress.

Primal anarchy isn't reducing our experience, but understanding it. We aren't dead yet, we've just been broken to the idea that we can do something about our condition. Anarchists typically dream of their ideals as though they will be able to craft some new means of subsistence. They believe the narrative that egalitarianism may have never existed, but take the risk anyway. They strive for the improbable because they fixate on the impossible.

What we have is a living legacy. When we start feeling it and finding our grounding again, then we can stop seeking our dreams through civilization's apparatus and vision. We can stop being bound to repeat the mistakes of history only to think that next time we'll do it better: we won't. Domestication has always had to work to undermine primal anarchy and more often than not, it fails. It has only built a mighty arsenal and it has bred a lot of bodies to throw into trenches.

⁷ Most specifically, Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State*. New York: Zone, 1989 [1974]. For Scott, this is a recurring theme through all of his work, particularly; *Weapons of the Weak*. New Haven: Yale, 1985, *The Art of Not*

But we have the upper hand: when we embrace primal anarchy, when we cease to be anarchists, we no longer have to play on their terms. Power and control were never meant to be harnessed, not by anyone. Civilization succeeds in cutting the throats or infecting the minds of those who seek to steer away from it. Primal anarchy reminds us that the world the domesticators have built leaches our living, wild world. That world is not dead, but it is being suffocated and suppressed. We can wallow through the rest of history, counting our dead as they fail to take control. Or we can dig deeper and follow the path of domination, find its bottlenecks and strangle them.

Primal anarchy reminds us that a functioning world isn't one where power is fought, but where it is rendered impossible.

Future? Primitive?

The project of annulling time and history will have to be developed as the only hope of human liberation.

- John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*⁸

Anarchism has its own baggage, but primitivism might have more.

The term "anarchy" may predate the term "primitivism," but as a movement or reflection, primitivism has a slightly longer history. Art, music, literature; primitivism is all of these things on a wider level than it is a means of social critique. And even there, anarcho-primitivism might just be the loudest of its advocates.

But what primitivism can be is generally confusing. There's no consensus amongst those who have chosen the label and those who have had it applied. Without the anarcho- preface, it likely wouldn't have any teeth.

The indisputable aspect of "primitivism" is the root of the word: *primitive*. Taken on its own, that aspect gets a fair amount of negative attention. It would be wrong to say that as a term 'primitive' is free of judgment or value. It is treated as an insult towards Indigenous peoples because it is still widely used as one.

At its best, "primitive" was a part of the early anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's attempts to classify societies. Here you have three classifications: *savage*, *primitive*, and *barbarian*; or, hunter-gatherer, horticulturalist, and pastoralist/agrarian, in that order.⁹ As imposed terms, there's no point in saying that this categorical application by a social science is neutral. Coming from an imperialist society, the colonialism is implicit. But, for whatever it's worth, it would seem that the usage of this strata was not intended for the horrifically racist justifications of colonizers.

That said, anarcho-primitivists have never denied that what was more lasting and impacting than Morgan's social theories were the realities of colonization. These terms were used to demean and to justify genocide and ethnocide, leaving the salvaged lives of Indigenous communities to be stripped down by missionaries and sold as prostitutes, slaves, and workers.

The "primitive" in primitivism remained because it accepted that this is how colonizers worked. And, as a big fuck you to the colonizers. The term flips the entire measure. In this regard, civilization hasn't won by the force and will of inevitability, but has suppressed and decimated an

Being Governed. New Haven: Yale, 2009, and *Against the Grain*. New Haven: Yale, 2017.

⁸ John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*. Columbia, MO: CAL Press, 1999. Pg 29.

⁹ Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995 [1877]. I've joked somewhat

ecologically and socially stable world to suffocate the rest in an imposed and ultimately failing civilization.

There's a bit of street brawler in there that can easily be sanitized out of context. Philosophers and literary critics, the masters of thinking about thinking, have drug out the corpse of post-modernism and its latent uprooting to pull this purposefully aggressive reaction back into the realm of ideals.

For years, I've been dismissive of their attempts: usually saying primitivism could only be racist by upholding colonial idealism and on from there. Not that all critiques have no merit, but just that these ones were latently dismissive, not meant to engage. Likewise, they've rarely been worth engaging.

Personally, nothing about my views on the usage of "primitivism," as a term, has changed fully in this regard. But I have to admit, I'm hardly alone in having pulled back from using "primitive" as a descriptor in nearly any other case, unless it's within quotes or used more sarcastically. Removed from context, it just becomes distracting in unnecessary ways. I don't know if that alone is reason to abandon the term, but it was enough to draw it into question. In doing this, there are more reasons why the term is as fitting as anarchism, if not less so.

Outside the issues with the word's etymological base, there are bigger issues with its implications.

Primitivism lacks definitive context. "Primitive" is a considerably older word than primitivism and anarchism. It might have been more specifically implied as an "uncivilized person" (which is harder for anarcho-primitivists to take issue with), but it is a reactionary term. Much like anarchism.

Primitivism remains rooted in concepts of linear time. While many primitivists, like anarcho-primitivists, have actively attacked notions of history as a progressing and monolithic force, "primitive" here is self-referential. "Primitive" isn't a horticultural society, but alluding to a "simpler," less complex state. In many cases, that can be equally inclusive of the State or state-level societies.

Primitivism becomes diluted to the point of just meaning a preference for an earlier state of "social evolution." Paul Shepard tried giving it power by speaking of a "post-historic primitivism." No friend of the calendar or clock, John Zerzan's "future primitive" is both a challenge and a threat to our understandings of time. Both have tried to free primitivism as a source of primal empowerment and a reminder that what goes up must come down.

Both, in my eyes, succeeded, but the caveats on the terms seem to just grow. As the critiques expand, the need to distance from so much impotent primitivism becomes more obvious. If you've passed billboards for "primitive" decor or any other agrarian throw back, you've probably winced as much as I have. Critics of anarcho-primitivism often toss out the lazy and tired response: "go live with the Amish then." But we can only shrug so long before accepting that without heavy connotation, primitivism has no point of reference at all outside of "previous" or "earlier" times.

We can keep pressing on and rolling our eyes at it, relying necessarily on anarcho-primitivism as an all-or-none term, but I'd rather reassess here. This is another area where primal anarchy makes more sense.

The words *primal* and *primitive* share a lot of etymological history, but where they vary is significant. "Primitive" is used to imply simplicity. "Primal" is used to invoke primacy. To the point: "primitive" is *who* and *when*. "Primal" is *what*.

Primal is latent: not over there, but here. The distance of the past and place are removed because “primal” is what we are before being domesticated, colonized, and taken captive. Anarcho-primitivists have always sought to understand the roots of civilization and domestication to undo them. This isn’t a task for a time machine, but of tracing patterns through history going back to where our separation from the world began.

The anarcho-primitivist critique has always been about finding patterns in history and the reflections of civilization. It seeks to understand how our own relationship with the world and each other is interpreted and placed within that lineage. Here, time itself is crucial to the domestication process: the civilized narrative is that *we* have changed. That *we* made a choice. That *we* strove to improve our condition and that a world of machines enhances *our* experience.

The ideology of civilization, when distilled, is that *we* don’t only need civilization, but that we’re better off because of it. Divergent views of the world stem back to the great questions of philosophers: what is the social contract and where did it begin?

But that level of articulated control never came overnight. It grew exceptionally slowly as hunter-gatherers settled around flush fields of wild grains and seeds or where plants were selectively planted and animals were ultimately domesticated. However, both of those things happened in relatively few places.

And, most tellingly, none of the outcomes have improved our lives in any qualitative way since. Yet this is the story that we are told and then tell ourselves over and over again. History is born of an agenda and that is to affirm that we are prisoners to time. If you want to hunt and gather for a living, that ship has sailed. Or so that’s how the story is told.

This is such a twisted and small vision of the world. One that is demonstrably untrue.

Hunter-gatherer societies, embattled though they may be, still exist today. It is their adaptability and resilience that have helped them escape the earth-leveling path of civilization. The story we tell of foragers becoming gardeners, and then taking up herds of domestic animals in one hand and turning gardens into fields with the other, until technology permits a new era of industrial growth, is a lie. Our past has virtually never broken down that way, even when looked at from the perspective of the civilized.

What is prevalent is our primal anarchy. Every single domesticating force, every single colonizer, every engineer and prophet, has had to fight against it. As social animals, that is why we tell mythic stories to implicate a cosmic meaning and power to be found in the fields, factories, workshops, and, now, outlet malls.

The struggle of civilization is the constant suppression of the wild. That includes the wild within us. It is our primary sense of want and need. It is the part of our mind that must be bargained with by bosses and administrators. It is the part of our body that sits at desks or stands in factories only to practice walking on a treadmill or stationary bike later.

When primitivism flips the table over, saying in defiance that we were better off before, a part of our grounding is lost. In reacting, we implicitly accept the timelines and inevitability of accumulated power in the hands of the State. It becomes easier for philosophers and literary critics to say that we’ve upheld the Fall-from-Eden myth, despite our protests and evidence to the contrary, for one simple reason: *primitive*, as a term, is always somewhere and someone else.

It accepts “The Fall” narrative because it can easily go from placing the origins of civilization in historic time to historicizing our domestication. From the viewpoint of primal anarchy, there

publicly that “anarcho-savagism” would have been a more appropriate label over “anarcho-primitivism.”

was no grand event. There was a historical point of entry for domestication, but also an illicit understanding that it is a constant and on-going force.

Primitivism is born of nostalgia. Primal anarchy reminds us that domestication can and must be resisted at every single impasse. Being our *primary* state, when everything else is stripped from us, this is what remains: a wild animal.

It's hard to simply be sentimental about something when you realize you never lost it.

Re-wild, Resist.

I take it for granted that resistance is the natural human response to dehumanization and, therefore, does not have to be explained or justified.

-Fredy Perlman, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*¹⁰

"Human nature exists."¹¹

Those are the opening words of anthropologist-turned-doctor Melvin Konner's 2002 book, *Tangled Wing*. Konner's work was with nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, much like Marjorie Shostak, who was the co-author of their 1988 book, *The Paleolithic Prescription*.¹² That book was the failed launch of what would eventually become the Paleo diet, along with its lifestyle aspects—from barefoot running to minimalism to natural movements and so on. It failed because it took dietary information from nomadic hunter-gatherers anecdotally and brought in a third author, Dr Boyd Eaton—also a physician—to tether the anecdotal information against contemporary medical practices and advice.

The book might not have taken off in even a fraction of the way that subsequent Paleo books and contributors have, but its premise is telling: we evolved to be nomadic hunter-gatherers. The same message that Shepard brought to the forefront decades earlier, but now in an actionable, scientifically approved package.

You have Paleo/Primal authors like Nora Gedgaudas, absolute in her basis of proscriptive diet and lifestyle advice within nomadic hunter-gatherer life and respond directly to a world of industrial toxins.¹³ Outside of that small circle, gurus and marketers ready to grab and conquer a niche market have hijacked the majority of the Paleo world.

Though much of what we see is diluted or often convoluted, the illicit principle is here: you are a hunter-gatherer in mind and body, so you should, at the very least, eat like one. Cue a bunch of jarhead ex-military evoking "caveman" imagery. The point gets drowned out, but that exposes the bigger picture on a new level: domestication becomes clearest when you begin to see the patterns of historic time arising. In this case, it's pretty straightforward. Those selling Paleo foods (even packaged ones) are telling us something intrinsic about ourselves but intervening with sustenance-for-sale over subsistence.

Just as it has always been for domesticators, the closer something is to our actual human nature, the easier the sales pitch. If our interests are coddled and catered towards a consumer-based identity, then we're less likely to dig deeper. Bait and switch, this time on the genetic level. Human nature becomes apparent not through distilling blueprints of nomadic hunter-gatherer

¹⁰ Fredy Perlman, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1983. Pg 184.

¹¹ Melvin Konner, *The Tangled Wing*. New York: Holt, 2002. Pg xiii.

¹² Melvin Konner, Marjorie Shostak, and S. Boyd Eaton, *The Paleolithic Prescription*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

¹³ Nora Gedgaudas, *Primal Body, Primal Mind*. Rochester: Healing Arts Press, 2011.

societies, but by filtering the institutions that arise with domestication, understanding their role and purpose. Here, you find the patterns. Even though their form might be radically different, their function is always the same: divert the needs of a nomadic hunter-gatherer through socio-economic and religious identities and rites.

The ability of marketers to capitalize on hunter-gatherer diets, lifestyle, and gadgets doesn't negate them; it just shows the power of social domestication. The lives of nomadic hunter-gatherers have always been the targets of domesticated societies and that remains true. They're hunted, systematically stripped of their land and their humanity, displaced and made destitute by missions, corporations, and governments, and deemed as evil or backwards by religion.

Even the existence of hunter-gatherers, as individuals and as societies, is such a threat to the fragile ecology of the civilized landscape, that they must either be rid of or contextualized. That's why Ishi, the last of the Yahi of California, died on display in a museum. He became a living relic of times past. After his death, his body was torn apart to become a literal relic.

What we are left with is a sanitized variation of reality. Just beneath the surface of skulls and cultural artifacts in museums is the radical realization that there's much more to the life of "cavemen" and that the egalitarian, primal anarchy they lived in is what our bodies and minds are comprised of. It's a pretty shallow grave, but it's still an effective one.

So the question remains, if a relatively mainstream wave can come to accept primal anarchy as our nature, even if left unarticulated, then why has this been such a contentious issue for anarchists and such a missed basis for primitivists?

We come back to ideals.

For primitivists, the nostalgia needs little reference point. Having succumbed to time, primitivists accept defeat to civilization, hoping to revitalize the past in some form rather than to liberate the present.

For many anarchists, however, human nature is terrifying. That's because, like anarchism, it remains an ideal. The more ideological of anarchists, as romantic as the less-articulate primitivists, don't have a problem with human nature in and of itself, they just see it as something to be actualized in the future, after the Revolution.

For the rest, human nature is dangerous because it can be weaponized. In all fairness, that's not the worst reason to avoid the term. Human nature, as used by nearly every nationalist, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary movement, has always been about exclusion. It is about defining who is or is not a human worthy of rights and inclusion in a society. At best, it becomes the subject of campaigns for civil equality, but, more often, it has filled gulags and graves.

If you want people to do horrible things, make them feel isolated, then give them a group and make them feel threatened or attacked. Human nature, here, is to solidify power: it becomes the idealized group, a more naturalized—yet more potent—form of xenophobic nationalism.

That's awful, truly it is, but it is contextual.

What we're talking about when we say human nature is that there is an ecological, biological, and psychological imperative to the way that our bodies move, thirst, and react. The only way that this is threatening is if those implications could undo the fragile socio-economic order that has been created. Because fascists on all sides have used the ideal across the political spectrum doesn't negate the simple biological reality that social animals have specific needs. If we neglect to focus on that, then we are left only with ideals about where power comes from and where it goes.

When we seek to undermine and bring down the very means that make social and economic power possible, it's pretty hard to see how gulags and trenches can come of it. Our goal isn't to weaponize the notion of human nature to prop up ideologies and States, but to expose the ways that domesticators hide it to turn us into subjects.

It's hard for me to soft-peddle this concept, because I don't think this approach is really that unique. Nearly every group that has a critique or praxis has some degree of human nature in mind, primal anarchy has only chosen to articulate it and that's because it is demonstrable. In a word, it's anti-idealist.

For the anarchist, the very minimum of definitions for "anarchy" implies a refusal of the legitimacy of State power and control. States say that we need them. What anarchists say is that we don't. Well, why? It's simple to point to primal anarchy as an example. But to say human nature doesn't exist, yet that a society without law won't be overwhelmed by chaos and violence is harder to ground. It all comes from somewhere.

We all have our wants. We all have our wishes. It's not liberating to say that they don't exist nor that they don't color our sense of urgency for action, it's disingenuous. Primal anarchy puts it up front. It identifies what it is, how it is suppressed historically, and how it is continually repressed through rituals of domination in our own lives. It is demonstrable because it isn't a historic event or ideal, but an ongoing process.

Like Konner makes clear above, we aren't the first to notice either. Anthropologist Tim Ingold writes:

*The advent of domestication, in both senses, had to await the breakthrough that liberated humanity from the shackles of nature, a breakthrough that was marked equally by the emergence of institutions of law and government, serving to shackle human nature to a social order.*¹⁴

In separating us from a living world, domestication hijacks our nature and obscures it by intertwining our needs with that of the machine. Human nature is never gone; it is simply re-purposed by civilization.

That is why we speak of *re-wilding*. The wild is implicit. Wildness is what we are removed from. Along the same lines, Ingold distinguishes enskilling from enculturation. Enskilling can "only take on meaning in the context of... engagement with the environment."¹⁵ Our ecology and biology are tied to the context of a wild world. The same one we evolved within and amongst.

That is our context. This is a context where anarchy isn't the ideal, but the default.

If we're willing to excuse the imperfect language, we aren't alone here either. Anthropologist Stanley Diamond was clear on the matter:

*The longing for a primitive mode of existence is no mere fantasy or sentimental whim; it is consonant with fundamental human needs, the fulfillment of which (although in different form) is a precondition for our survival.*¹⁶

In finally parting with "primitive," we recognize what anarcho-primitivism has always told us: time is a historic creation, one intent on universalizing our displacement from the wild world, to justify our decimation of the earth, to see our wild and less-domesticated relatives as less-than-human, and to leave the relics of our ancestry to history in our trail-blazing path to our destined future.

¹⁴ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*. London: Routledge, 2000. Pg 64.

¹⁵ Ibid. Pg 37.

¹⁶ Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*. Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1987. Pg 207.

Time gives us a story, a narrative. It gives us a place within the timeline so that we don't look around and wonder how domesticated plants and animals might have changed anything about who we are as individuals, as societies.

Primal is not an indicator of who we were, but who we are. It animates the past that history tames in death and conquest. It diminishes our ability to isolate the present from the future. It sees life as a continuum. In upholding primal anarchy, we aren't denying the anarcho-primitivist critique of civilization, but actualizing it. We are no longer anarchists wishing to live in anarchy, but the embodiment of a resistant primal anarchy. One that is capable of biting back.

We are agents, not spectators.

Our lineage doesn't end with the origins of domestication, but is the ever-present past of refusals and uprisings that have fought and continue to fight domesticators in all their forms. Colonizers win more often because they have the numbers and the technology, cannon fodder to continue throwing in trenches. Defeat comes with force and subjugation, not in ceding to the narratives of those with power.

Most resistance movements since have failed because of their inability to articulate targets. Like revolutionaries, the ideal dictates that you seize the means of production and the reproduction of power. It feeds off of a visceral and immediate rage, biting directly at the closest outpost of control. We have been in the unique position where hindsight is buried in plain sight. It is expected that we won't act on our rage, or at least not in unpredictable and uncontrollable ways.

On that playing field, anarchists lose. We will never defeat the State or civilization on its own terms or within its own limitations.

Primal anarchy shows us another world. The world domestication preys upon and prays against. It is here. It is within and around us. Not another time. Not another place. Like the world that shaped it, it is dynamic, resilient, and resolute.

It is us.

I see no reason why we should continue to see ourselves any other way.

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Kevin Tucker
To The Captives
A Declaration of War and Words
2019

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